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John Hancock

A

Pilgrim's Foot-Prints,

OR PASSAGES IN THE LIFE OF

REV. JOHN HANCOCK,

OF EAST MADISON, N. J.,

Who labored for Fifty Years as a Local Minister
in the Church of Jesus Christ.

BY ELLWOOD H. STOKES,

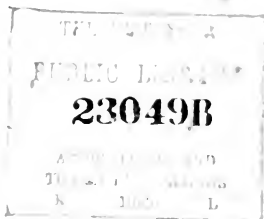
PASTOR OF THE M. E. CHURCH, MORRISTOWN, N. J.

"There is an energy of moral suasion in a good man's life
passing the highest efforts of the orator's genius."—CHALMERS.

NEW YORK:

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1855.



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TO THE READER.

It is right to record the virtues of the good. Such is the object of this unpretending book. It is hoped and believed that the subject of these pages, who spoke so often with power to the fathers, will now, though dead, speak, through this volume, to their children, for many years to come.

Should this be done, the prayer of the writer will be answered.

E. H. S.

MORRISTOWN, March, 1855.



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CHAPTER I.

ANCESTRY—BIRTH—CHILDHOOD—YOUTH.

“How soft and fresh he breathes!
Look, he is dreaming! Visions sure of joy
Are gladdening his rest; and ah, who knows
But waiting angels do converse in sleep
With babes like this!”

COXE.

TRUE Religion! How beautiful in all its developments—how sanctifying and elevating in all its influences! There are no scenes or seasons of human life that may not be adorned and beautified by the addition of this heaven-born principle. The day of prosperity is fleeting without it, while the day of adversity is made cheerful by its possession. On it the king and peasant are alike dependent, for “whatsoever things are pure and lovely and of good report.”

True Religion is always and everywhere the same. Yet, where earthly advantages are wanting, the leadings and grace of God are more conspicuous, and one spiritual achievement after

another, impressing the mind, leave at last no doubt that the power to accomplish them is divine. This was true of the subject of these memoirs. He was led on under the elevating influences of the Spirit and Providence of God, step by step, until he attained and for many years exerted a commanding influence among men. This was in no sense the result of scholarship, or the possession of worldly goods, the means by which so many arrive at eminence; but was reached and retained, to the hour of his death, through the *power of goodness alone.*

He was of English origin. His grandparents, Richard and Margaret Hancock, were deeply pious, and not enjoying the extent of religious liberty which they desired, came from England to this continent in company with several other families of the same character, about the year 1760, and settled in Nova Scotia. From this place, these voluntary exiles, in search of religious freedom and privileges, were soon driven by the terrible scourge of war. They fled to New York; and being obliged to leave their lit-

the property behind, found themselves, on arriving there, not only strangers in a strange land, but in a destitute and suffering condition. A band of noble hearts, their mutual sufferings created a bond of mutual sympathy. They wept and prayed, and, after mature deliberation, determined that a petition, containing a statement of their condition and asking for relief, should be drawn up, and presented to the Governor.

But who shall address His Excellency? This was a question of grave importance. It was finally decided that Mrs. Margaret Hancock should discharge this trying duty. She accordingly drew a petition, and it was immediately forwarded to the Governor, who, upon reading it, demanded an interview with the writer. She, with all that promptness which suffering induces, soon stood before him, subdued by sorrow, yet calmly upborne by an unshrinking faith in God. Could the mute appeal of that blanched countenance, the earnest pleadings of that wife and mother, be denied? They could not! And the relief they sought was granted. Richard and Mar-

garet Hancock subsequently settled in Elizabethtown, N. J., where the piety of the latter was largely developed. She was a member of the Presbyterian Church, and for many years enjoyed what she called the faith of assurance; a woman of ardent and persevering prayer, and, having the keys of the church in her possession, was in the constant habit of resorting thither at the midnight hour, to pay secret and silent devotions to God. It was, also, her custom to hold religious meetings, mostly in her own house, for the edification of her friends and such others as might attend. Being questioned on one occasion by a minister, as to her religious condition, she made an earnest declaration of her willingness to die at any moment, under a full conviction of all being well. The minister doubtingly replied, that he would be better convinced if her testimony were from the bed of death, as she might possibly find her faith to fail her in that trying hour. Many years subsequent, the same minister visited her when she was standing on the very brink of Jordan, and its cold, dark waters were

dashing up against her. Approaching the bed-side, and taking her icy hand in his, he said: "How is it with you *now*, Mrs. Hancock?" She replied, "It is the same with me now as formerly; I am not afraid to die." And soon after her peaceful spirit departed.

In the year 1774, John Hancock, the son of Richard and Margaret Hancock, and Mary Terrel, the daughter of a Connecticut farmer, both then living in Elizabethtown, were married in that place. They were the parents of the Rev. John Hancock, the subject of these pages. He was born in Springfield, Essex county, N. J., on the 6th day of December, 1776, a cold and dreary season of the year, at a dark and discouraging period of our country's history, and but six months after the "Declaration of Independence," which went forth to the struggling and dispirited colonies, bearing the signatures of most honorable men, while first, and boldest of them all, stood out a sacred and ever to be remembered name, just like his own—
JOHN HANCOCK!

The early history of John was dark and

discouraging as the period in which he was born. At the age of eight months, his father died, leaving his mother, with two helpless children, to struggle through these stormy times. A small sum left from his father's estate was paid over to the widow in continental funds, which at that time were of so little value as to require a whole dollar to purchase a single pound of butter. The cloud of war gathered darker and darker, and the prospect of support with this poor widow grew more and more discouraging. Sometimes she would go to the grave of her husband, and there seek relief in a flood of tears, and, reflecting upon her own hard lot, express her thankfulness that her husband was at rest. But the remembrance of her children forbade protracted indulgence in such solitude, though sweet. Efforts were to be made—her children must have bread. To meet these demands, she at times kept a small school, and by this and other means supported herself and children. But the cloud of war, which had been thickening in the distance, now be-

gan to spread over the widow's and orphans' home. Soldiers, hurrying to the battle field, were seen thronging every highway. Cavalry and footmen, gathering around their country's flag, resolved to surrender their families and fire-sides only with their lives. Early in the morning of June 23d, 1780, the enemy advanced from Elizabethtown, with about five thousand infantry, a large body of cavalry, and fifteen or twenty pieces of artillery. Their march was rapid and compact. They moved in two columns: one on the *main road*, leading to Springfield; the other on the *Vauxhall road*. These were strange and terrifying scenes to that otherwise quiet village, and, with intense and painful solicitude, this widow and her little children waited the result of the bloody conflict. Fierce was the strife. Men struggled for their homes, and bravely struggled; but, overpowered by superior numbers, were compelled to yield: the red flames of destruction leaped upwards in their fury, columns of thick black smoke rolled heavily towards the sky, and *Springfield was in ruins!*

Then Mary Hancock, with her two little children by her side, turned her back upon the smouldering ruins and her husband's grave, to seek elsewhere a shelter and a home.

These were the times which tried the souls of sturdy men! What, then, must have been the emotions of this homeless woman? What the answers which she gave the affrighted children clinging to her for protection? They were deep and fearful. We cannot know them! but it is blessed to believe that God, the widows' husband and the orphans' father, knew them all, and gave her strength according to her day. Bottle Hill, as it was then called—now Madison—became the future home of this mother and her children. Here they lived in a small building, in an humble way, she gaining a support as best she could, until 1784, when she was married to Mr. Josiah Hand, and a brighter day dawned upon them. The clouds of war had rolled away; the gentle dove, bearing the olive branch of peace, again spread her soft wings over all the land. Little John and his sister Abby

were comfortable in the home of their new father, and the mother felt relieved of many cares which hitherto had pressed upon her spirits. But, alas for all human hopes! in less than one year from the time of this marriage, death again wrote that wife a widow, and those children fatherless, and they were obliged to provide for themselves. But as John was now nine years old, the prospect was less cheerless; he would soon be able to provide for himself.

At the proper age he was apprenticed to a Mr. Richards, in Columbia, to learn the saddle and harness-making business. His opportunity for securing an education was limited; but he manifested a strong desire for knowledge. Books, at that day, especially in a remote country settlement, so lately scourged by the horrors of war, were scarce and costly. The thousands of volumes now written and published for the encouragement of youth, and, at a trifling expense, within the reach of all, had then no existence. Most of the books in circulation were large and learned, adapted to advanced

or matured minds, or small and child-like, unworthy the attention of an earnest youth, seeking after knowledge. But, when the desire to know is once settled in the mind, it is not easily relinquished. Young Hancock had this desire. The difficulties in his pathway were pushed aside, and he steadily pressed forward to attain this object. A thorough education was beyond his reach, yet he knew that he might, by diligence, acquire a fund of general information which should carry him respectably and usefully through life. A volume of nearly one thousand octavo pages, in excellent preservation, is still in possession of his family; the first book he ever called his own. It is entitled: A NEW GEOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL, AND COMMERCIAL GRAMMAR, AND PRESENT STATE OF THE SEVERAL KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD. By William Guthrie, Esq., London, 1794.

It was a large and sober volume, and at that day could not have cost less than six or eight dollars. This did not discourage him. Having seen or heard of it, he resolved that, large and

costly as it was, it should be his own. But how could so much money be obtained by a poor boy. The determined will always finds a way. In the vicinity of his mother's dwelling, *hazel-nuts* grew that year in great abundance. These, on the clear moonlight nights of early autumn, after his work was done, and while his young companions were in idleness, John gathered, and, at convenient times, sold them in the neighboring villages. In this way, he at last succeeded in gaining sufficient to make the purchase, and young Hancock carried home in triumph "THE GREAT GRAMMAR OF THE WORLD," *all his own*, bought with HAZEL-NUTS! It was a proud day, when the illustrious statesman, JOHN HANCOCK, of cherished memory, signed with his bold and massive hand the glorious Declaration of Independence, yet it is doubted whether deeper emotions stirred his mind than those which occupied the heart of his humble namesake, the day he carried home that ponderous volume. The book became a neighborhood talk and curiosity. Its fame went forth, and many, even of the richer

portion of community, came to see, and read or hear from its learned pages. This book he not only read, but studied; gaining thereby a general knowledge of the world, the advantages of which he felt through life. With a mind thus stored and strengthened, he is found soon after committing his own thoughts to paper, sometimes in sober prose, but oftener, much oftener in rhyme. Nearly everything that transpired around him furnished subjects upon which to write, so that, among the remains of his early days, there are some things exceedingly amusing, while there are many others of the purely thoughtful and sedate. If a neighbor died, he generally penned a few lines on the occasion, and, if advisable, sent them to the surviving friends; or, if any of his young companions or acquaintances were joined in matrimony, it inspired his muse. On one such occasion, he writes:—

“ In love's conquests there are greater joys
Than in the taking of ten thousand Troys;
In softer passions we can find more peace
Than was enjoyed by bloody, conquering Greece.”

He wrote much, yet was painfully conscious of the imperfections of his efforts, and often expressed his regret that his early opportunities were so limited. Nevertheless, he was unwilling to bury the talent God had given him, and, therefore, diligently employed it for the Divine glory through life. As we shall have occasion frequently, in the course of this narrative, to introduce scraps, and sometimes whole articles from his pen, it is deemed proper, at this early period, in order to prepare the reader to receive such articles with all that toleration which charity requires, to insert the following lines, his own apology, addressed to an editor to whom he sent an article for publication :—

“If, sir, you disapprove my simple tract,
I pray inclose, and seal, and send it back ;
Should you at sentiment or language smile,
You’ll make allowance for my simple style.
In infancy I lost a father’s care,
A father’s counsel, and his earnest prayer.
Not born to fortune, or in science skill’d,
In lower ranks my station poorly fill’d—
But, God is Sovereign, why should I complain,
Of want, of losses, crosses, or of pain.”

Thus he apologizes, in his unsophisticated way, for the want of perfection in the efforts of his pen.

Occupied, during his leisure hours, with such pursuits, the period of his minority passed rapidly away. Inheriting a feeble constitution, he was compelled, by frequent attacks of illness, to abandon his trade before his apprenticeship expired. The year before he became of age, his mother was again married, to Mr. Robert Forrest. Between this gentleman and his step-son there soon sprang up a strong mutual attachment, continuing till the death of the former, which took place in the year 1806, leaving his mother for the third time a widow. About five years before the death of Mr. Forrest, he gave John a small lot of ground for building purposes, and subsequently devised him the whole of the farm in East Madison, subject, however, to the payment of such legacies as amounted to almost, if not quite, the value of the entire property. On this farm John Hancock lived and died.

CHAPTER II.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES—REPENTANCE—CONVERSION.

“No wounds like those a wounded spirit feels,
No cure for such, till God, who makes them, heals.”

COWPER.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”—JOHN 1 : 9.

MAN is a fallen being! How painfully evident is this mournful truth. Look where we may, and, unless we are willfully blind, the proofs appear. “If,” says Fletcher, “we regard man as an inhabitant of the NATURAL WORLD, his fall is proven by arguments deduced from the misery in which he is now undeniably involved; compared with the happiness of which we cannot help conceiving him possessed when he came out of the hands of his gracious Creator. Look at the disorders of the globe we inhabit, and the dreadful scourges with which it is visited. The deplorable and shocking circumstances of our birth—the untimely dissolution of little children—the gross

darkness in which we naturally are, both with reference to God and a future state—the heavy curse of toil and sweat to which we are liable—the innumerable calamities of life, and the pangs of death. So, if we consider him as a citizen of the MORAL WORLD, a free agent, accountable to his Creator for his tempers and conduct, his fall will be further seen by his commission of sin, his omission of duty, his manifest alienation from God, and his unholy tempers.” But apart from these, there is another proof, if possible, still more pointed. Man *feels* that he is fallen; and, while unrenewed by grace, is conscious that he is not what he ought to be.

So felt John Hancock, and, as early as his sixteenth year, was fully convinced that he was a sinner, and, without a change of heart, must be miserable forever.

But, refusing to yield to conviction, the result was as it always is in such cases; his heart became harder, and he grew more indifferent to the things of God. For many years he sought, as the unregenerate always do, pleasure in the

world, believing the world had happiness, if he could succeed in finding it. But he sought in vain.

Frequent failures awakened in his mind serious inquiries, as to whether he sought happiness in the right way. If happiness exist in the objects which I pursue, why do I not find it? Why am I still discontented, and without true rest of soul?

These inquiries were natural, and one evening, when about twenty-four years old, he resolved to prove to the utmost the ability of worldly enjoyments to satisfy his mind, but returned from the pursuit like a weary racer, and, sitting down the next morning, jaded with the effort and stung by disappointment, wrote the following

“REFLECTIONS

ON THE PREVIOUS EVENING.

How oft these vain and fading joys
Sorrow and anguish bring,
Indulgence in these trifling toys
Leaves in the mind a sting.

My thoughtless soul, be on thy guard,
Pleasure no more pursue,
Thy real joys it will retard,
And prove thy ruin, too.

My soul, bewail thy follies past
And seek for joys refined ;
Jesus can give a sweet repast,
Can fill an empty mind.

My soul, earth's joys all fade away,
O choose the better part,
The path that leads to endless day,
Where thou, dear Jesus, art."

How clearly these lines disclose the dissatisfaction which he felt with earth, and his earnest desire for something higher and more enduring. The surprise is, that one who knew nothing, practically, of the way of salvation, should write so correctly. There are two thoughts which will explain the matter. First, his mother, who had been from the time of her first marriage, and perhaps before, a member of the Presbyterian Church, and in the constant habit of leading her children to the house of God, where he heard of the vanity of this world's pleasures, and the absolute need of the religion of Christ to make us

happy; and secondly, he had himself drank sufficiently deep at the fountains of earth, to be fully and painfully satisfied, that the waters which flow therefrom are like those drank by the Israelites at Marah—bitter, exceedingly bitter. So that, with the teachings of the sanctuary, confirmed by his own experience, he wrote more like an advanced divine than one just turning his back upon the world; to seek a home in heaven.

From this time, he made the salvation of his soul the chief business of his life.

But, in reaching that point in religious experience where the soul feels a scriptural assurance that God is reconciled, and that the believer has passed from death unto life, he had difficulties to encounter, and conflicts to endure. He felt that he was under condemnation. He knew Christ had died, but how to make that death the means of imparting life to his own soul he did not then fully understand.

Nevertheless, he determined to persevere in the use of the means of grace—"cast down, but not destroyed." In this, his example is worthy

of imitation; too many, when they first turn their attention to the subject of Religion, not comprehending all its heights and depths, become disheartened, and turn again to the world. But John Hancock was satisfied of the existence of a "pearl" beyond all price, and that pearl he determined, by the grace of God, to find, though he might have to dig over every inch of the soil where there was a possibility of its being hid. He knew that there was a Holy Spirit, and the influences of that Spirit, he desired, above all things else, to feel.

About this time, he heard two sermons at Hanover, by Rev. Mr. Condit. What the subjects of the discourses were he does not say; but such were the impressions which they left upon his mind, that, upon his return home, he wrote the following beautiful description of a true penitent:

"When from *experience* shall I know, and say,
The blood of Christ hath washed my sins away?
When will my Father condescend to give
His Holy Spirit, that my soul may live?
O when, dear Jesus, will thy love descend,
And my rebellions in submission end?"

Father, forgive my want of love to thee !
I am not worthy thou shouldst dwell in me !
Come, cleanse my heart, and make my spirit true ;
Come, form my soul entirely anew.
O say, dear Jesus, whither shall I flee ?
The Word of life resides alone in thee !

If I thy love should never see or know,
Is it because I've grieved thy Spirit so ?
Thou knowest my heart is more than adamant,
And yet, that heart for living streams doth pant.
May I but love—may I thy love receive,
And never, never more thy Spirit grieve !”

The Holy Spirit, for the influences of which he so earnestly prays in these lines, was evidently doing a great work upon his soul, and although he complains that his heart was more than adamant, yet that heart was then so mellowed by divine influences, that it seemed willing to become *almost* any thing, so it but received Christ. And it may be that this one word, *almost*, explains the difficulty; for we must be *quite* willing to become any thing or nothing in order to receive Him, who is the All, and in all. A great divine once asked a poor but pious man, where he *found God!* “I found Him,” replied the poor man, “where I gave up every thing else.” And for

the want of this *entire* surrender of the soul, John Hancock was, for nearly a whole year, a sorrowing seeker of the grace of God.

In July, 1801, with a sad, but longing and imploring spirit, he asks:—

“Where shall I find the lovely Lamb,
That I may ask Him home,
That He may dwell where'er I am,
And never from me roam?

I'll search the hills for his retreat,
I'll seek through mount and vale,
I'll search till I my Jesus meet,
Though life and flesh shall fail.

I'll search by midnight, every grove,
I'll ask of every tree,
If they can tell me of my Love,
Or where his tent can be.

My feet,—my soul shall never rest,
Till I have found the Fair
Whose love can make me ever blest,
And sweeten every care.

With the tall shadows I'll converse;
They'll sigh, at every word,
To hear the grief that I rehearse
In seeking for my Lord!”

Here is a poor wanderer in the wilderness—a wounded, bleeding soul, seeking for the balm of Gilead, and the Physician there.

Indeed, his mental sufferings were sometimes so intense, and so keenly did he feel the wrath of God abiding on him, that he often wished that he was a beast, a worm, or any thing not possessing an immortal soul.

During all this time, he gave constant attendance upon the means of grace; listening to sermons from eminent divines, such as Whelply, Finley, and others, but still unsatisfied.

On one occasion, after hearing a sermon on the wise and foolish virgins, he writes:—"Consider, O my soul, whether there is oil in thy lamp or not, lest, if the bridegroom should come this day or night, thou shouldst not be ready to enter in to the marriage. O, Almighty God, giver of every good and perfect gift, if consistent with thy holy will, pour the oil of grace into my heart, so that I may be ready at thy coming." And again:—"When, O blessed Jesus, shall I wake to righteousness and sin no more? What wait I for?

Art thou not standing with open arms, waiting to receive me—art thou not inviting all the ends of the earth to come and be saved? O, then, if the invitation is to all, it extends to worthless me; why, then, do I refuse, or why halt so long between two opinions? Thou hast said, 'I am the way and the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me;' and *I* know not the way: oh, teach me, draw me by thy love, constrain, guard, and guide me by thy Holy Spirit. Show me the way to thyself by Jesus Christ. O hasten the time when I shall know thee, if thou art to be known—oh, help my unbelief!"

In the distress of his mind at this time, he wisely sought relief by conversing with those who loved the Lord, that they might counsel and direct him in the way of peace.

He writes:—"Spent the day with Mrs. H., a worthy follower of the Lamb. O, God, make *me* like unto the children of light; and, I humbly beseech thee, lift upon me the light of thy countenance, that I may no more stumble upon these dark mountains of sin—how long, dear Saviour,

oh, how long will this bright hour delay?" A few days afterwards, the clouds of doubt and darkness gathering again, so depressed him that he cries out, " 'A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep,' is thy language, O my soul." In a short time, reviving a little, he exclaims, "Permit the light of thy reconciled countenance to shine, where the natural sun can have no access." And then, rising still higher, as if on the very heights of Calvary, and at the foot of the cross, with a heart all mellowed by the scenes there witnessed, he writes:

"Alas! my soul, was it for thee,
The Saviour bled upon the tree?
Was it for such a wretch as I,
That Jesus did consent to die?

Henceforth my soul, with all thy might,
Love and adore the God of light,
With endless joy, and matchless praise
Breathe out the remnant of thy days."

Then, addressing his soul, exclaims, "Behold the matchless condescension of Almighty God, in convincing thee of sin, and in striving with thee

by his Holy Spirit; behold the clear views He gives thee of Himself—thy ready utterances at a throne of grace, and the soul-ravishing delights, the rapturous joy experienced in communion with Him; behold thy Saviour interceding for thee. O let my soul be filled with matchless praise to the adorable Trinity! ‘Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name.’” Here he has reached a point before unknown, and seems, for a moment, not only standing upon the very threshold, but really to have entered the gate of life. The next instant his faith fails him, and taking lower ground, cries, “Behold thy God *about* to be reconciled, in and through the merits and intercession of his dear Son.”

Was not God *already reconciled*, had his faith been strong enough to receive the blessed truth? We believe He was; and it was simply the want of a renouncement of self, and a *full* reliance upon divine mercy, through Jesus Christ, that kept him back from peace. Salvation, and the *assurance* of it, are both the result of simple, unyielding faith in God. Therefore, like the

Israelites of old, John Hancock touched the very borders of the promised land, and then, like them, went far back into the wilderness again; all for the want of a little stronger faith. In a few days he adds:—"Here I am, O my God, perishing for lack of grace," and then eagerly inquires, "Is there not in thy house bread enough and to spare?"

All through these exercises, he was paying his addresses to her who, afterwards, in the providence of God, became his wife. For months she had been so dangerously ill, that many times her life was despaired of, and, during much of the time, she, too, was in great agitation and anxiety, in reference to her own soul. A double burden therefore fell upon this penitent and greatly distressed young man. Several times, as it appears from notes made by him at that period, it was thought she was about to die: then he, though not yet clear in his own experience, struggled for her with God in earnest prayer; not merely as a lover, for her recovery, but as a man of faith, for her soul's salvation. "O God," said he, "take

her not hence, till thou hast given her an assurance of eternal life through J esus Christ! O give her triumph over death, and enable her to shout aloud in the God of her salvation."

His prayer was answered. She found peace with God, and, after a protracted illness, was restored to usual health.

On Saturday evening, December 5th, 1801, the evening previous to his birth-day, he writes:—"The close of this day makes twenty-five years since I came into existence; may the anniversary of my natural birth be also the day on which I shall be born of the Spirit. O my God, give me the witness that I am born of thee!" On Sabbath, December 6th, his birth-day, he says:—"Heard a sermon by Mr. Perrine, then fasted, and wept and prayed for the Spirit of God to witness with my spirit that I was, indeed, born anew. But Lord, what do our sighs, and tears, and groans avail; ah, our fastings and our prayers? We do not expect to merit salvation by any thing that we can do, but we beg, as humble suppliants at thy feet, to be heard and accepted, for Jesus'

sake." And then, in relief to his mind, and the mind of her who became his wife, and who had joined with him in the above exercises of fasting and prayer, he writes:—

“ Father in Heaven, thy will be done,
Finish the work thou hast begun ;
Permit us, Lord, before we die,
Thy holy name to glorify.

Vile as we are, O Lord, we flee,
Through Jesus Christ, thy Son, to thee ;
Help us, O help us, Lord, to come,
And bow, obedient, at thy throne.”

Again light increases in his mind, and he obtains a clearer view of the great truth, that salvation is to be received through faith *alone*.

This is set forth in the following lines, written at the time :—

“ Thou Jesus, Lord, who calm'd the seas,
By speaking to the wind,
Come with thy Word, and give me ease,
Come, calm this troubled mind.

Now, Lord, I give myself away,
Depending on thy grace ;
I hope to find eternal day—
To see thy lovely face.

Not by the works which I have done,
Or can expect to do,
But, through the merits of thy Son,
I now for pardon sue."

No one will question but this was the right way in which to seek. Why, then, did he not obtain? The fear is that, while he wept, and prayed, and fasted, all of which he had been faithfully doing, he, after all, unconsciously rested more in the merits of his own works than in the all-atonement merits of Christ; or that, while he gave himself away, as he seems to have done in the above lines, he had not sufficient faith to believe that God, for Christ's sake, was willing then to accept the offering; did not understand that "now is the accepted time, and now the day of salvation." These religious exercises commenced, and were greatly promoted, by a revival of religion, which took place in the Presbyterian Church, of which for many years he was a constant attendant.

Some time during these exercises, the pastor of that church being absent, he attended a meeting held by the Methodists in a private house at

Cheapside. After the public services were over, class meeting was held, at which he remained; the first he ever attended. At the conclusion of these exercises, he, with several others, was invited to dine with Brother Brainard Dickerson. He was pleased with all he saw and heard in the house of this worthy man; the term brother and sister, as applied to each, particularly struck his ear. "This," said he, "is Bible religion,—it is all love."

From this time, Cheapside and its humble sanctuary were visited as often as possible.

On Sabbath, December 13th, 1801, he joined the Methodist Episcopal Church. Elizabethtown circuit, as it was then called, embraced Elizabethtown, the whole of Staten Island, Rahway, Belleville, New Prospect, Stony Brook, Rockaway Valley, Whippany and Chatham. This ground was occupied by two preachers, and passed over by each once in four weeks. At the time above referred to, the Rev. Joseph Totten was preacher in charge, who, after preaching at Chatham, received the trembling Hancock into

the bosom of the Church as a probationer seeking salvation. After this he writes:—"O my God, what have I been doing? Have I not been openly professing to be a follower of thine, with a heart too little affected with a sense of my unworthiness? O my God, for Jesus' sake, take me, O, take me, as I am, a vile, worthless worm—

Poor and naked, blind and needy,
To thee, O God, I come for pity."

After taking this step, he again suffered in his mind. Satan tempted him to doubt, and a question arose as to whether he had duly considered the matter; so that, in less than a week, he writes:—"Come, O my soul, sit down and count the cost of becoming a servant of the living God. In the first place, it will cost thee self-denial,— 'denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, living soberly, righteously and godly in this present evil world.' In the next place, it will cost thee the favor of the world; thou wilt lose their esteem, and gain their ill-will and reproach. It will also cost thee, in the estimation of the ungodly, thy honor, credit, and good character. It will cost thee, in

the next place, mortifications, which will not be pleasing to flesh and blood, for we are commanded though the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the flesh. He, to whom we profess to belong, says, unless we take up our *cross* daily and follow him, we are not worthy of Him. In the next place, it will cost thee many a sorrowful day, in pressing thy way through this thorny road—many a night of sadness, in being opposed in thy heavenward march. Again, it will cost thee many a conflict with sin and Satan—many a combat with the flesh—many an engagement with the world, and the opposers of godliness! ‘But, thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.’ This, my soul, is but a small part of what it will cost thee to be a Christian. And now, what thinkest thou of all this?” Then his faith is seen towering to a height never before attained, while he emphatically exclaims:—“All, all is nothing, yea, ten thousand times as much more is of no value, when compared to the love of Christ; and all that a creature can enjoy of a temporal nature, is not to be set in competition with communion

with my God. O, my God, let me lose all, forsake all, despise all, be despised by all, so I but win Christ at last."

In January, 1802, again bowed down, he says: "I want to be directed by thy Spirit. I want the light of thy countenance. I want faith, love, perseverance. I want

To feel thy quickening power within,
To free me from this load of sin,
That I may learn my God to serve,
And love without the least reserve."

Weeks passed on, and, about the last of the month, he says:—"My God, what condescension is this! Thou hast bestowed life and liberty upon a worthless nothing—and now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity"—and I *know*, O my God, that I have faith, because I believe that thou art a rewarder of all them that diligently seek thee. I *know* that there is hope within me, because I believe, and through faith hope to possess everlasting life in Jesus Christ my beloved Saviour,—but succeeding these is the best of the wine,

charity:—yea, Lord, and I *know* that I have *charity also*, for I love thee, and thy commandments are not grievous; I *know* in whom I believe and hope, and Him I love.”

A little after this, having spent nine tedious months in heart-rending struggles with sin and unbelief, he adds:—“ This evening, while engaged in prayer, that God would grant me, if consistent with his holy will, some clearer evidence of my acceptance with him—if, in reality, I had found the favor of God, that He would make it manifest that my sins were indeed forgiven—rising from my knees and opening my Bible, the first words that I cast my eyes upon were these : ‘ Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see.’ O my God, what joy then broke in upon my long-troubled soul; and in a moment, it seemed that I had taken a fresh start for heaven. The voice of Jesus, in the passage as I read, seemed almost audible. O, never let me forget the obligations I am under to thee, my God and Saviour,—may

I ever keep at the foot-stool of sovereign mercy, acknowledging my obligations, and pleading for the guidance of thy Holy Spirit."

It is only necessary to add, in conclusion of this chapter, that John Hancock was now, through faith alone, a *new creature* in Christ Jesus; possessing a scriptural assurance of eternal life, beautifully described in his own language, thus:—

"Hope is desire, and *expectation, too,*
Of future bliss beyond our present view;
Entering the vail, above this sea of strife,
It grasps the promise of eternal life."

CHAPTER III.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES CONTINUED—GROWTH IN
GRACE—MARRIAGE.

“ Grace! ’tis a charming sound,
Harmonious to the ear;
Heaven with the echo shall resound,
And all the earth shall hear.”

DODDRIDGE.

“ But *grow* in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”—2 PET. 3: 18.

PARDONED! How sweetly this word strikes the ear of one who, for a long time, has been under condemnation. Peace! How the troubled soul delights to feel the blessed emotions which this word conveys. Deliverance! How the prisoner leaps when he feels his chains fall off, and sees his dungeon doors fly open. In the day of his conversion, John Hancock felt the blessedness which all these words denote. He had been so long in bondage, that, when deliverance came, he *knew*

it, felt it, and rejoiced in it. It was a great deliverance! But the whole of Religion is not known in the day of our conversion. We have then just *tasted* that the Lord is good—just entered upon our Christian pilgrimage and warfare. We have then learned only the first letter in the religious alphabet—while beyond, there is much for us to suffer, much to enjoy. Much to suffer, because there is much to learn; and we are usually such slow scholars in the school of Christ, that chastisements are often necessary before we willingly exclaim:—“*Thy will be done.*” There is much for us to enjoy. Religion is high and holy, deep and inexhaustible. God is love; and there is always before the mind of the pious man the anticipation of a pledged and promised heaven. Therefore, be comforted, O ye saints, for though in the world you may have tribulation, yet, One greater than the world assures you, “*In me ye shall have peace.*”

John Hancock found *peace* with God; but the days of his trouble were not yet ended. True, in reference to his soul, he was now happy; but,

having pursued a course which his friends did not approve, he found that to be a *Christian* brought upon him the reproach of *many*, yet, to be a *Methodist* the scorn of *nearly all*. These were, therefore, days of bitterness, and he cries out:—"O God, hide not thy face from me; Lord my soul is vexed, even unto death. I am opposed by those who call themselves the people of God; from a vain world I expected no more, but when I am opposed by the professing people of God—the temptations of Satan—and the rising corruptions of my own heart, my faith wavers, and I think I have no grace. Now, O my God, I pray thee stand by me, keep me from falling, give me faith firmer than the mountains—love stronger than death—and zeal not to be outdone; let thy name be glorified." And then, as if his prayer had received an immediate answer, he goes on his way, cheering himself thus, with one of his own songs:—

“When opposed on my way
To my Father’s abode,
I will wrestle and pray
With my Saviour and God.”

For my Saviour has power,
At a word He can quell,
And crush in an hour
All the powers of hell."

He had faith to believe that his difficulties would either be removed, or he would have grace to endure them. The latter was the case. His discouragements, of one kind and another, continued for many years, so that even after he had settled in life, and had a family around him, the ungodly, in passing his house at night, would frequently engage in singing such hymns as were used in social religious meetings, in mockery of his devotion, while he, with a grieved spirit, would sometimes say:—"They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I am the song of the drunkards." Yet, through all these scenes, he had grace, not only to stand, but to grow up into Christ, his living Head. He advanced in religion, learned more of his own heart, and of the power of divine grace to save even to the uttermost all that come unto God through Christ.

It must not be thought, however, that his road was all thorny. No, there were many green spots

as he traveled the narrow path; many cedars of Lebanon, under whose grateful shade he could take rest and renew his strength; many a gushing spring, of whose waters he could sweetly drink; many a mount, where he could hold communion with his God. He often found a highway in which to walk, where every valley was exalted, and every mountain brought low. "This morning," he writes in one place, "being much affected and very sad, while engaged in prayer to my heavenly Father, I turned to my Bible, when these words brought unusual joy to my soul:— 'Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God.' Now, I believe," said he, "that thou, O Lord, art a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God; let me never forget to praise thee." Then, after a little, he utters one of his own songs, thus:—

"When, my dear Saviour, can a mortal be
More fully happy, than when loving thee.
O that this *heartfelt* joy would ever stay,
To bear me up to realms of endless day.

O grant thy love, my God, while I have breath,
Grant to support me in the hour of death,
Grant, then, to take me to thy blessed arms,
O draw me, keep me, by thy lovely charms."

Here he realizes a very pleasant state of mind; truly, a joy that the world cannot give. Yet he sees in the King's *highway* greater attainments, and longs to possess them.

Meditating one morning on the things of God, and the way of salvation, these words, "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord," made a deep impression upon his mind, and he felt the great necessity of an entire consecration to God. "I cannot," said he, "be holy, without a holy love, which I suppose to be love to God, for holiness' sake." "I feel assured," he writes, "that it is this unsanctified heart that keeps me at such a distance from God, which causes me so often to wander without the light of his countenance;" and feeling this, he fell upon his knees several times in the course of the morning, humbly desiring that Almighty God would sanctify him wholly. "O," said he, "so great are the exercises of my mind, that my very soul seems melted

within me, and my cry is sanctification, sanctification. O my God, may I love thee more, and serve thee better!"

Was not all this scriptural? How many beautiful instances the Bible contains of just such spiritual pantings! And what sweet encouragements the Bible affords to all who thus hunger and thirst. They *shall* be filled! John Hancock did not seek in vain; and it is interesting to watch him in his steady progress, "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth his fruit in his season."

But shall a man be interested for himself alone? Is Religion *selfish*? Is it not rather purely benevolent in its character? Descending from the skies, does it not partake of the nature of the skies? Is it not like its Author—love?

We must not be surprised, therefore, if, in his earnest struggles for a *higher life*, John Hancock should see beyond himself; and, seeing, sympathise with those still in the way of sin. It was so. There were many whom he knew and loved, still trying to satisfy themselves with earth; living

without God, and without hope in the world. Can a believer in divine revelation, and the reality of future punishment or bliss, be indifferent to the interests of such? They cannot. Hence it is only what might be expected, to find John Hancock, about this time, writing thus:—"This morning my bowels even yearn over the ungodly of this place. My soul is melted, my head has become a fountain, my eyes rivers. O, my God, I pray for those who do not pray for themselves; are not their souls as valuable as my own?" Again, he says:—"This evening, led out in prayer for an ungodly world of sinners." And then, burning with holy zeal in the cause of his divine Master, and anxious to be of some service to his fellow-men, he breaks out:—

“Had I the wind at my command,
And could I ride thereon,
I'd fly thus swiftly through the land,
To tell what God has done.

I'd trace the world from sea to sea,
I'd land at every isle,
And tell what God hath done for *me*,
The vilest of the vile.’

To rising ages I'll relate
The goodness of my Lord,
How great his love, how wondrous great
To all who trust his Word.

I'm sure, if men could only know
What joy my Lord can give,
They all would be partakers, too,
Of his eternal love."

On one occasion after this, being very happy in the God of his salvation, he is suddenly assailed by Satan. "The tempter," says he, "tempts me to believe that this drawing out of soul after God arises from some *natural* cause, but I know better; the devil is a fool and a liar: for *twenty-five years* I lived in a state of nature, and was never sensible of the least degree of this love that now flows in my heart." And then, though Satan had tried hard to wound and discourage him with this suggestion, he writes the very next day:—"O how my God doth animate and cause my soul to rejoice in him," proving that, if we resist the devil, he will flee from us. At another time, he says:—"Never was my will more resigned or swallowed up in the will of my heavenly Father; never

could I repose more confidence in God ; never did the world appear less ; never had I greater desires to be weaned from the world ; never more willing to be poor ; never more disdained all earthly enjoyments, as being insufficient to satisfy a longing soul ; never did I enjoy more peace in believing ; never was I better rewarded for being resigned to God, for never was I happier in the enjoyment of God's love than at this present time."

Thus he progresses from one degree of grace and strength to another, until, in the language of the Apostle, "he came in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

It must not be supposed, because there are no particular references to worldly occupations and duties running through these exercises, that he did not engage in such pursuits ; on the contrary, he was all this time a hard-working young man, rising up long before the sun, and retiring late ; mingling of necessity with wicked men ; indeed, attending to all the duties of life ; yet, in his

mind, keeping above the world and its unholy influences. In the discharge of his duties as a citizen, he was called one day to attend a militia training at Parsippany. All acquainted with these exercises know the demoralizing influences connected with them, and how often those who go to play the soldier come back conquered by the demon—Rum. John Hancock went to this training, not merely as one of the militia of his country, but as a *soldier of the cross*. “Hence,” said he, “I have had this day an almost continual sense of the presence of God. At the training, I fell in with several warm-hearted Christians, with whose conversation I was pleasingly entertained.” On returning home in the evening, he says:—“My soul is all on fire for the kingdom of my God.”

On the 3d day of April, 1802, in the very midst of these spiritual exercises, he was married to Miss Phebe Ward, to whom reference has been already made; one who, sympathizing with him in all his religious views and aspirations, walked by his side, not only as the companion of his life, but as a true *Christian helper*.

It is pleasing to know, although John Hancock was so deeply exercised on the subject of religion, that it did not make him gloomy and morose, or insensible to the innocent joys of social life. Accordingly, we find him, with a great deal of pleasantry, inviting Rev. Joseph Totten, the same clergyman who had received him into the Church, to celebrate their nuptials, in the following lines:—

“ Since nature does our hearts unite,
Kind sir, we now do *you* invite
To ope the flattering, joyous scene,
Which contemplated long has been.

Nature has fixed the band so sure,
It will admit no other cure,
Except a *ceremonial* band,
Which your assistance does demand.

Since nature, then, the band has made,
We trust you'll not refuse your aid,
Or give the smallest reason why
This band of love you will not tie.

Come, join our hands, we trust our heart,
Which nothing less than death can part,
With form of words, compliance show
To laws of God, and nature too.

Now pray that Christ, our gracious Lord,
His every grace may us afford,
That praise in all things we may give,
To our Redeemer while we live."

No clergyman could decline an invitation so pleasant and pressing, and they were duly united in holy wedlock, a God-fearing and heaven-aspiring couple.

In the religious life, it is important to do all things with an eye to the glory of God. It is not only the reading of the Bible, the offering of supplications unto God, the public worship in the sanctuary, that must be done religiously—but all things:—"Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or *whatsoever* ye do, do *all* to the glory of God."

This, John Hancock did. And thus he gained religious strength, enjoyed religious prosperity, and secured ultimately the universal respect of men.

The religious life of John Hancock did not strengthen and advance, however, without the use of appropriate means. It will not with any. In order to a growth in grace, there must be religious nourishment and exercise; and this nour-

ishment and exercise not only impart vitality to the soul, but constitute its chief enjoyment. How delightful! and yet how different from the world. In the world, the pleasures of sin are our ruin; but the pleasures of Religion are our strengt hand life.

John Hancock loved and used all the means of grace within his reach. The public worship of God, whether in the temple, school-house, or private dwelling, he alway attended when possible so to do. From a child, the sanctuary had been a sacred retreat, and, now that he had become a man, it was little less than a second nature to repair to its sacred precincts, and there from the depths of his soul worship Him who liveth for ever and ever. How salutary are the influences of the Church of God. How much we owe to its refining, subduing, and elevating power. Here, the rich and the poor meet together, and the Lord is not only the Maker, but the Preserver and the Redeemer of them all; and while the poor man, in view of his destitution, may be humbled and discouraged, yet here, where the

Gospel is freely proclaimed, in view of the rich grace and everlasting mercy of God, he is encouraged and blessed, and he that came unhappy goes away rejoicing. The Church of God—a blest asylum to which the weary and worried ones of earth may always flee; a sacred fold, where the still waters ever flow, and the pastures are green.

The social means of grace were also his delight. Where the people of God were, there he loved to be. Sometimes a few of them would gather in the humble dwelling of a poor neighbor, and spend the evening in singing, prayer, and exhortation. Class meeting was a stated means by which his spiritual growth was greatly promoted. It met regularly at the house of his father-in-law, once a week. Here, at first, he arose with great timidity and trembling to speak of his religious condition; but he soon found great liberty in bearing testimony for Christ, and that, in thus waiting upon the Lord, he renewed his strength. Here, as in a school, he learned the dealings of God with his children from actual experience,

and, being thus instructed, was better prepared to go out and overcome the world. These meetings, afterwards instituted in his own house and continued to the present day, he attended, with as much regularity as circumstances would admit, during the whole period of his life.

Through the exercise of prayer, too, he had large expectations of spiritual supplies. He was not disappointed. Oftentimes would he go to his closet, cast down and discouraged; but in communion and fellowship with God his soul was refreshed and comforted. How many times a day did he pray in secret? Ah, that is a question difficult to answer. Emergency knows no law. When his wants pressed heavily upon him, he prayed very often. One day, he writes:—
“ Fell upon my knees eight or ten times to plead with my God for a fresh manifestation of love, and who is like my God to hear and answer prayer? While waiting upon Him my soul is turned from sorrow to joy, from mourning to gladness.” Though we may not conclude that such was his *habit*, yet there is abundant evidence

that his times for secret prayer were *fixed* and *frequent*. But these secret devotions, pleasant as they were, did not cause him to neglect or lightly esteem that other and also very important duty, *family worship*. In this, he was not only very strict, but found also special satisfaction. This duty, whether at home or abroad, in the house of acquaintance or stranger, he regularly performed *three times a day*; gathering his children, workmen and visitors thus often, he would recognize God as the giver of all mercies, and then invoke heaven's richest benedictions upon them. No business or journey was of sufficient importance to induce him to omit it. It was a part of his conscience to worship God around the family altar. Even when there had been, as was often the case, preaching or prayer meeting in his own house, after the congregation had retired, he would gather his household together, saying:—"Nothing, not even the religious exercises in which we have just engaged must excuse us from our domestic worship;" then falling down before God, would humbly commit his family to the

special care of heaven. Nor was all this, as it might seem to some, a drudgery. No! God's worship is never drudgery. "Oftentimes," says a member of his family, "he would, especially while his children were yet young, gather them around him immediately after supper, before they were overcome with sleep, and, opening the Bible to read therefrom the counsels of redeeming love, exclaim:—'This, my children, is the *best part of all the business of the day.*'" And so it was. It is the service of the world, of sin and of Satan, that is drudgery and toilsome, but Religion's ways are pleasantness and all her paths are *peace*—the best and only refreshing part of the business of the day of life. Such was the fidelity with which he discharged this duty, that there are some now living, apart from his own family, who date their first religious impressions from mingling with him in these hallowed scenes of domestic worship, away from the noise and din and show of earth.

In performing this duty, he felt that he had not only the interests of his own soul to look after, but the souls of all his family—to him they

were looking up for example, instruction, and encouragement. It is quite probable that he felt a greater interest in it, by a remembrance of his own early destitution of all such blessings; as he pathetically wrote:—

“In infancy I lost a father’s care,
A father’s counsel, and his earnest prayer.”

Feeling this loss through life, he resolved that, while God should prolong his days, his children should enjoy that which a wise Providence had seen proper to withhold from him.

Long before his conversion, and especially afterwards, he was particularly attentive to the reading of the Holy Scriptures, often perusing them upon his knees, with a heart uplifted to God in earnest prayer, that light might shine upon the sacred page; and, while thus engaged, realized the blessing for which he sought.

Thus faithful in all the means, it is no wonder that he grew in grace. True, he merited nothing; but God always smiles upon the efforts of the truly faithful, and in that smile there is spiritual prosperity.

Having followed him up to this point, in his religious growth, it is proper to insert here the following paper, written by himself, and published several years ago, over his own signature, in the *Northern Christian Advocate and Journal*, entitled:—

“A FEW PLAIN DIRECTIONS

HOW TO BE AN ACTIVE AND CONSISTENT CHRISTIAN.

1. Never forget that you are constantly exposed to be turned aside, either in heart or life, from the path of duty. “*Because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist, steadfast in the faith.*”—1 PET. 5 : 8, 9

2. Be sure to read enough of the Bible, every day, to furnish a subject for practical reflection. “*Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.*”—JOHN 5 : 39.

3. Always seek the direction of the Holy Spirit and the blessing of God upon the business of every day before you enter upon it, and never commit yourself to the slumbers of the night till

you have sought a blessing on your efforts the day past. "*Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice.*"—PSALMS 55 : 17.

4. Never forget that, if you revenge or retaliate injuries, you inflict upon yourself an additional injury. "*If thy enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty give him water to drink: for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee.*" PROV. 25 : 21, 22.

5. In regard to attending meetings designed as means of grace, always be governed by your solemn convictions of duty, and not by your present feelings. "*Jesus said unto his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*" MATT. 16 : 24.

6. Always preserve a cheerful spirit, but never indulge in trifling and levity. "*Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel.*"—PHIL. 1 : 27.

7. Avoid giving the least intimation that you

are better than others. "*But in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*"—PHIL. 2 : 3.

8. Receive admonition with the spirit of kindness, and never attempt to reprove or reclaim others but with the spirit of love. "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*"—GAL. 6 : 1.

9. Never indulge in unfriendly remarks concerning others in their absence. "*Whoso privily slandereth his neighbor, him will I cut off.*"—PSALMS 101 : 5.

10. Always cheerfully confess if you have done wrong, or have been mistaken. "*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed.*"—JAMES 5 : 16.

11. Be ready to enlist in every benevolent enterprise of the day. "*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.*"—ECCLES. 9 : 10.

12. Never defer till to-morrow what may and

ought to be done to-day. "*Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.*"—PROV. 27 : 1.

13. Never engage or continue in any business which you have doubts is not right in the sight of the Lord. "*As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.*"—JER. 17 : 11.

14. Read no books but such as will feed the mind with useful knowledge, or promote piety in the heart and life. "*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*"—COL. 2 : 8.

15. Be always ready to introduce conversation on the subject of Religion when a suitable opportunity presents, or to join in it when introduced by others. "*Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it.*"—MAL. 3 : 16.

16. Never suffer sin to remain unrepented upon

your conscience, nor let it prevent you from doing your duty. "*And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men.*"—ACTS 24: 16.

17. Be careful to improve the holy Sabbath, and all its attendant means of grace, in such a way as to honor God, and promote the life and power of godliness in your own heart. "*Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.*"—ISAIAH 56: 2.

18. Meditate often and seriously on the uncertainty of life. "*For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.*"—JAMES 4: 17."

These are his rules. They do not constitute simply a beautiful theory, but are all of them scriptural, and therefore practicable. He who framed them did not do so with a view of making them obligatory upon the hearts of *others* only, but developed them all in his own life and conversation, with a strictness to which few attain.

CHAPTER IV:

PREACHING THE GOSPEL.

“How beauteous are their feet
Who stand on Zion’s hill,
Who bring salvation on their tongues,
And words of peace reveal.”

WATTS.

“And as ye go, preach.”—MATT. 10 : 7.

God has purposes of mercy to a fallen world. In the accomplishment of these purposes, He employs various instrumentalities and methods. Will not his wisdom, therefore, lead Him to select such as are best adapted to secure the end in view? We believe it will. Hence, in the Church militant, there are various kinds of laborers, “some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers. Having, then, gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophecy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth,

on exhortation." "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administration, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." Beautiful harmony; each one having a sphere appointed him, and then moving in and filling up that sphere, according to the ability which is given him of God. This is as it should be. In the vineyard of the Lord, there is a place for each and all to work, and, each one filling his appointed place, the harmony can never be disturbed, and the purposes of God will be accomplished.

As soon as John Hancock realized that spiritual resurrection, which brought the life and power of God to his heart, he felt a strong desire to do good. Is it not always so? The grace of God is diffusive, and, when it dwells largely in one heart, creates the desire that it should be imparted unto all. He, with others, felt that it was his duty to use the talent God had given him, in exhorting sinners to flee from the wrath to come.

In accordance with this united conviction, he

went forth, very soon after his conversion, in company with Brainard Dickerson, a devoted man of God, to various places—school-houses, private dwellings, or wherever a door was open—exhorting his fellow-men to repent and believe on Jesus Christ. In these efforts he felt weak indeed, and but for a sense of duty, and the disinterested friendship of his pious companion, who greatly encouraged him in his course, he might have failed in his public efforts altogether. But weak as he was, feeling that religion was the great business of his life, he not only made these public efforts, but spoke, with every one he met, on the subject of a personal heart-felt interest in Christ. Having pursued this course for some time, with the approbation of the Church, he received license to use his gifts as a LOCAL PREACHER in the Methodist Episcopal Church as early as 1803 or 1804. From this time the field of his operations was greatly enlarged, as he visited every neighborhood in the circle formed by Flanders, Paterson, Newark, Rahway, and New Providence, preaching in all these places, according to his ability, the everlasting

Gospel of the grace of God. If, to aid him in the discharge of this duty, he could not bring a profound scholarship, he brought that which is no mean qualification—a warm and earnest heart, enlightened and instructed by the Holy Ghost. Thus informed, he said:—"It was a minister's duty to have humble views of himself, exalted views of the being and perfections of God; a zeal for the glory of God, and the advancement of his kingdom on earth; a steadfast adherence to the truth; universal love and good-will towards men; and that he should, publicly and privately, strive to enlighten and convince the mind, and to point out the way of salvation by faith, through Jesus Christ."

In accordance with these impressions, he labored to store his own mind with as much general information as time and circumstances would allow, but on no account to neglect that which was absolutely essential—a divine and scriptural knowledge of the things of God.

During all these labors, obliged to provide for the wants of his family, and attend to the

interests of his farm, which, it will be remembered, was heavily encumbered, his time for ministerial study was limited; and, indeed, it is evident that he could have had no time for such a purpose, had he not been in the habit of rising in the morning and commencing his work while the stars were yet shining in the heavens. Many of his sermons were studied in the corn-field, or while scattering broadcast the seeds into the earth, and there is no question, but that every inch of his farm soil is sanctified by prayers which he offered upon it, for the salvation of perishing men. He was called of God to preach, and, wherever he was and in whatever he did, the salvation of men was uppermost—his first thought in the morning, his last at night.

Having the spirit of his Master and his mission, he considered no toil, that his constitution could endure, too great to be put forth in the service of his Lord. Hence, for many years, through storm and sunshine, heat and cold, he pursued his solitary way, weary miles over mountains and through valleys, in search of Christ's scattered sheep, that

he might lead them into the *green pastures* of the Scriptures, and open to them, through the means of grace, the *still waters* of his spirit.

He felt, and deeply felt, in the language of an author whom he quotes:—"This is a guilty world, and it needs pardon and justification; it is a suffering world, and it needs consolation; it is a polluted world, and it needs sanctification; it is a dying world, and it needs inspiring with immortal hopes. Christ crucified, and the Gospel which unfolds his divine mission, constitute the only adequate remedy for the sins and woes of a rebellious race," and feeling thus, he could only cease from laboring, when, "the weary wheels of life should stand still at last."

His calls on funeral occasions were very numerous. He was often, at such times, required to go at a moment's warning; but he never refused. Quitting his field, he would hasten to the house of mourning, and there consider it his chief joy to pour into bleeding hearts the balm of Gilcad. On one occasion, in time of harvest, his crop being cut and cured, longer exposure to the weather

would prove a serious injury, if not an entire loss. There were evidences of an approaching storm. The preacher and some of his sons were taxing their strength to shelter the crop which God had given them.

In the midst of these efforts, with the prospect of success before them, a summons came for him to attend a funeral *immediately*. In an instant, pitch-fork and rake were dropped, and turning to obey the call, a son-in-law said:—"Father, how can you go *now*; can't they get somebody else?" He simply replied:—"I am determined that *nothing* shall prevent me from preaching the Gospel," then went to the house of mourning and discharged his duty.

So anxious was he to do good in all possible ways, that his own house, commenced in 1802, on the lot given him by his step-father, was, as soon as completed, dedicated to God, and opened for a regular preaching place, and continued such until 1832. Here, men venerable in age, and eminent for piety, many of whom have already passed away, preached the everlasting

Gospel of the grace of God, with power and great effect. Among these were, L. McCombs, D. Bartine, Sen., Asa Smith, John Potts, Geo. Wolley, Benjamin Collins, Joseph Lybrand, Charles Pitman, Geo. Banghart, T. Neal, B. Weed, E. Page, R. Petherbridge, I. Winner, Bishop Janes, P. Vanness, M. Force, W. A. Wilmer, and many others. Through their instrumentality, many were brought to the knowledge of the truth under his roof; but the full amount of good accomplished can only be known in the eternal world.

The labor connected with holding meetings of this kind in a private house, for a series of years, must of necessity have been very great; but it was borne with cheerfulness, in the hope and belief that good would be accomplished.

Having such exercises in his own house one night, he would be off ten or twelve miles the next, to fill his own appointment in some other dwelling or school-house; then returning late, and while others were asleep, would be up the next morning before the sun, and at his daily toil.

While thus engaged in tilling the soil, he says of himself:—

“ I labor where a sacred priest,
Is rare, if ever, found;
And toil like some domestic beast,
To cultivate the ground.

My garments are well suited to
A rustic peasant's fare,
And little like the dress, 'tis true,
That modern *preachers* wear.

'Twas thus decreed that Adam's race,
In union with their Head,
By pain, and toil, and sweat of face,
Should gain their daily bread.

O how unlike the happy state,
In Paradise began,
Where sin, nor shame, nor pain, nor hate
Annoyed the peace of man.

Still may I hope, and pine no more,
At toil, and grief, and pain;
The second Adam will restore
To Paradise again.

Thus, though sorrowing one moment over the evils of the present, he rejoices the next in the prospect of a better state at last; for, “ he that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed,

shall doubtless come again with rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him."

In meeting his appointments, there was always a marked punctuality. For many years, he had an arrangement to preach, once in four weeks, at the Morris "*County Poor-house*," and such was the regularity with which he met these monthly engagements, that his presence at these times was looked upon as a *fixed fact*. The pauper family became greatly attached to him.

On one occasion he was sent for to preach at Rahway, on the same day of his appointment at the Poor-house; requesting his son, also a local preacher, to go to the latter place, the father proceeded to the former. By some means, the son was fifteen or twenty minutes behind time. When about a mile from the "*house*," a man was seen coming down the road with rapid strides; it was a delegate from the pauper family to see what had become of the preacher. As he came up abreast with the vehicle, he stopped, and eying the son closely, who, by-the-by, very much resembled the father, exclaimed, as he discovered the mistake,

“Oh, I thought it was Mr. Hancock.” “It is Mr. Hancock’s son,” said a friend; “the old gentleman has gone away, and the son has come to supply his place.” “Ah! well,” said the poor man, shaking his head and heaving a sigh, “*I am afraid he is not so good a man as his father. He never disappointed us.*”

He had an appointment one evening at a school-house in Livingston township. When the time arrived, there were just *two* individuals present. Taking out his watch, he said:—“Two weeks ago, I announced that I would preach in this place to-night, at eight o’clock; it is now that time; if I do not preach I shall tell a *lie*, and you know that ‘all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.’ Therefore, I *must* preach.” And preach he did; but before getting through, he had quite a congregation.

“This,” said one of the *two*, first present, “though many years since, and I was then a wicked young man, made an impression on my mind, of the importance of fulfilling my engagements, which I have never forgotten.”

Laboring in 1835-36, on the Fort Lee Mission, under the direction of Presiding Elder M. Force, of the New Jersey Conference, he had an appointment in a sparse settlement thirty-one miles distant. When he arrived, and found his congregation, it consisted of seven *small children*, four colored persons, three white women, and two men, sixteen in all; but, remembering that his Master, while at the well of Samaria, preached to *one*, he took courage, preached the best he could, and then returned, making a journey of sixty-two miles. It was done with cheerfulness, because it was done for Christ

About the same time, he made efforts to obtain a place for holding meetings, in the town of Hackensack. Not succeeding in his purpose, and believing that he ought to preach the Gospel even *there*, he posted up, in some prominent place, the following

“NOTICE.

- July nineteenth, in eighteen thirty-five,
If God permit, and I should be alive,
Under a willow, near one Vanderpool,
There will be preaching, say, by wise, or fool,—

Will be proclaimed to men, the truths of heaven,
At half-past two, should audience be given,
And the good people are, hereby depend,
Respectfully invited to attend."

A FARMER."

Rev. S. T. Vanderbeck, of Hackensack, a local deacon in the Methodist Episcopal Church, then a young Christian, describes the meeting following this notice, in a recent letter, thus:—

"At the appointed time the preacher made his appearance. It was a lovely Summer afternoon. With a steady step, and devout look, carrying a chair which he had borrowed of a neighbor for the occasion, he approached the willow on the village green, and took his position beneath its shade. Many sat down on the grass before him. The steps, doors, and windows of the three public, and numerous private houses, within hearing, were filled with people. To these he unfolded the glories of the cross, in a free and full salvation, by repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. All, even those who chanced to be passing at the time, were interested; and many felt the power of that Gospel which he preached. *The*

sight was truly sublime! Yet some stood off, as if fearing the taint of a terrible heresy. The next time he preached here, I procured a number of seats from one of the hotel-keepers, and seated the green for the accommodation of a number of persons. Afterwards I obtained permission for him to preach to the prisoners. His text was the language of the Philippian jailor, 'Sirs, *what must I do to be saved?*' The house of Mrs. Haselden was then opened for him, where he preached every two weeks, for some time. Leaving this place, it was his custom to ride to English Neighborhood, put up his horse, then walk over the mountains to the Hudson river, and hold meetings at the house of Mr. Anderson Bloomer, under the Palisades."

He did not wait for the people to come to him, but, knowing their destitution, sought them out, and carried to them the bread of everlasting life. In so doing, his own physical wants, and those of his horse, were oftentimes but poorly met. On such occasions, he would not only sing away his own sorrows in some of his ever-ready rhymes,

but tried even thus to soothe his poor horse. Having at one time ridden a number of miles, in order to preach, he tied his horse to a post. After service, no one offering him feed for the animal, he wrote the following lines :—

“ Could my poor horse articulate a sound,
Perhaps he'd ask where friendship could be found,
And say, though I'm a poor domestic beast,
I am the servant of an humble priest ;
And he has come the joyful news to bring,
Which gladdened angels, and made angels sing,
And, in return, *I ask one friendly deed,*
That you in kindness would my body feed.”

Thinking, however, that poetry might be poor food for a faithful horse, he determined to avoid the difficulty in future ; so he records :—“ Oct. 23d, carried my horse feed to H. ; Nov. 20th, carried feed to H. ; Dec. 4th and 18th, do. ; Jan. 1st and 15th, do.” There is no doubt that the horse was better pleased with this arrangement than with any poetic effusion, however eloquent ; and Father Hancock, conscious of this fact, ever after, on all doubtful occasions, took care to carry, not only a free Gospel, but his own *oats also*.

Receptions like this were, however, by no means universal; in many places they not only gave him a hearty welcome, but were glad to take care of himself and horse. In the late years of his life, such kind receptions became general. All were glad to see old Father Hancock. Still it is quite evident that his expenses, while laboring to do good, were never fully met.

After laboring in the ministry for ten years, he was elected, in the year 1814, by the Philadelphia Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, to deacon's orders, and ordained. Such he continued until 1833, when the same body elected him to the office of an elder in the Church of God, and he was ordained by Bishop Hedding. In this capacity he labored until death.

He preached in the city of Newark, when there were but five members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in that place, and several years before there was any church edifice; but, in the good providence of God, he lived to see some ten churches, with a membership of over two thousand belonging to this denomination. Wesley Chapel,

in Halsey street, the first of all, was built in 1808. In this place he often preached. Just before this building was torn down in 1852, to give place for the new and beautiful edifice now occupying the original site, the Trustees made a request through the writer, then their pastor, that Father Hancock would, if able, occupy the pulpit of their old house once more, before it was removed. He cheerfully complied, and, at the appointed time, aged men and women were seen crowding their way to the place of worship, to hear the Gospel, once more, from the man who was associated with their earliest remembrances of the Methodist Episcopal Church. After the sermon, which was listened to with marked attention, numbers gathered around him, calling to mind the scenes of other days; while younger persons, whose parents or friends he had buried, greeted him with tearful eyes. It was an impressive scene—an old man's farewell to the building which was the scene of some of his earliest labors in the Christian ministry, and knowing that the old edifice was about to be removed, he felt, too, that the

time of his departure was at hand. Some time during the following Summer, he again preached, by invitation, three sermons on one Sabbath, in the new house, to large and deeply interested congregations. By this time, he had become so enfeebled by rheumatic pains, that he was obliged to occupy a sitting position while delivering his message: this added to the interest of the occasion.

In his pulpit performances, he had good matter, and a very considerable variety of topics. He declared the whole counsel of God. As early as 1822, he preached a sermon from these words:—
“ ‘Wo unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, that continue until night, till wine inflame them,’—Isaiah 5: 11;—of which the following is a sketch:—

It will be my object to show:—

I.—The causes of intemperance. These are as follows:—

1. The making, vending, and use of ardent spirits.
2. Vain and idle company.
3. Fashionable practices (tippling).

I will show :—

II.—The evil. (As a medicine it may be of use.)

1. As a common drink it is useless and hurtful.
2. It creates, instead of allaying thirst.
3. It leads to evil company, and to haunts of iniquity.
4. It leads to neglect of business, spending time and money, contracting and neglecting to pay debts.
5. It leads to the neglect of religious duties, public, social, and private.

III.—The wo. In temporal matters :—

- 1 To a derangement of business.
2. Utter loss.

In morals :—

1. A vitiated heart.
2. Good habits abandoned.
3. Evil habits and sentiments contracted.
4. Hatred of and disrespect for men.
5. The disapprobation of heaven, the curse of God, and the damnation of hell, for no drunkard shall enter the kingdom of heaven.”

The above sketch is not inserted because it contains anything new on the subject of temperance, but because it was, in 1822, a position far in advance of the times.

On a Christmas day, a few years after this, a gentleman asking him what he would drink, he made the following

“REPLY.

It ill becomes a sacred priest
To tipple, sir, with wine ;
His business ought to be, at least,
To preach the truth divine.

Wo unto him, who, rising up,
Whatever be his name,
Continues drinking at his cup,
Till wine doth him inflame.

A three-fold wo from heaven shall fall
On his devoted head ;
And of these woes, the worst of all
Is, *torment when he's dead.*”

The influence of this reply, made with the known solemnity of the speaker, must have been withering, indeed.

It will be seen from the above, that Father

Hancock allowed no opportunity to escape without an effort to impress upon the mind some good moral lesson.

In the mention which he makes of his various preaching places, there is frequent reference to his having been at camp-meetings. These meetings were more frequent then than now, though still held in many localities, with considerable regularity. In devotions of this kind he greatly delighted. As this little volume may fall into the hands of some who have never been present at such gatherings, it is deemed appropriate to insert here the following account of one of these meetings, found amongst the papers of Father Hancock, though written by another hand:—

“CAMP-MEETING SCENE.

Traveling later one evening than usual, I lost my way. After wandering about for some time, on turning a precipitous ridge which obstructed my course, I came suddenly upon one of those singular gatherings of the Church militant, called camp-meetings. Before me stretched a grove of

tall pines, beneath whose dark foliage, and in striking contrast with the same, were pitched numerous white tents, embracing a level area of several acres in extent, entirely devoid of underbrush, and carpeted with the falling tresses of the overhanging boughs. On one side of this enclosure, several feet from the ground, appeared a plain lodge, quadrangularly formed of rough boards nailed to the trees, with the pulpit in front, and benches around the sides, for the elders and ministers who were to address the congregation. From this spot to various points in the enclosure, stretched in diverging lines the straight poles of lofty pines, felled for the occasion, across whose prostrate length, with the interspace of here and there 'a long drawn aisle,' were laid the rude seats of those hardy worshipers. Innumerable lamps were suspended on all sides of the encampment, blending their flickering light with the glare of pine torches from the several tents where the evening's repast was in preparation, while millions of fire-flies shot like tiny meteors along the dark openings of the surrounding forests, and the eyes of the sleepless

stars looked on as if to witness the devotions of that primeval temple.

As I paused to survey the wonderful scene, the wild howl of a wolf rang through the shuddering air, and a moment after a fawn passed me, and, bounding into the enclosure, dropped down exhausted in one of the open aisles. This singular instance was succeeded by a dead silence, which was presently interrupted by the voice of the speaker, who had just finished the last discourse of the evening, and was about reading the concluding hymn. 'Welcome,' said the aged man, with compassionate emotion, 'welcome, poor, wearied and persecuted wanderer, to the refuge and rest ye seek not here in vain! Ye did well to flee hither from thy ravenous pursuer, for thereby have your days been lengthened, and ye shall yet range through the green places of the wilderness, where the hand of God bringeth forth the tender herb and the pleasant water-courses, even for creatures such as ye. Pilgrims of the world,' continued he, turning to his hushed auditory, 'shall the beasts that perish be wiser in

their day and generation than ye, who are fashioned after the image of the Allwise? Flee to the fold of God! The wild pigeon shrinks to her covert at the scream of the wood-hawk, and the roebuck bounds fleetly from the yell of the panther, while ye, who are encompassed with many foes, having eyes, see not, and ears, hear not, or heed not the voice of the prowler. Wot ye not that ye, like that poor panting hind, are hunted up and down in this dark wilderness of the world. Flee to the fold of God! Doth not temptation haunt your footsteps from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof? Doth not remorse dart his fiery arrows into your bleeding hearts at every turn? Doth not conscience smite ye with its avenging sword whenever ye turn a deaf ear to the still small voice? Flee to the fold of God! Do not the cares of the world, its vanity and vexation of spirit surround ye, when ye rise up and when ye dream dreams? Flee to the fold of God! Is not death the ever present shadow of your earthliness, and doth not the Prince of the power of the air—the mighty Nimrod of your priceless souls—

trace your guilty souls along this pilgrimage of sin? O flee, then, fellow-sinners, flee to the fold of God, wherein ye find a refuge and a rest!’

Vain were the attempts to depict the scene which followed the peroration. The sighs and groans, the sobs, the hysteric shrieks of the terrified females, and, indeed, the convulsive shudder of the whole assembly, I leave to the reader’s imagination—or memory, if he has ever witnessed a spectacle so thrilling. After the first burst of feeling had a little subsided, the tremulous yet not unmusical voice of the late speaker was heard chanting that striking hymn:—

‘Stop, poor sinner, stop and think,
Before you further go;
Will you sport upon the brink
Of everlasting wo?’

One listener after another joined in the strain, till presently ten thousand voices were blended in the swelling symphony. I have listened to the midnight peal of the roused ocean, and trembled amid the thunderings of the Niagara, but never was my heart hushed to breathlessness, as by the

living chorus of that solemn anthem. The place—the scene—and the music of that vast choir, filling the depths of the mute forest with echoes of terrible warning, were all calculated to make a vivid impression even on a mind the most obdurate. I sunk down on my bended knees, awe-struck and overpowered. It seemed to me that every voice was directed to myself, in eager imprecation to fly from the brink of the dreadful abyss to which 'hope never comes.' The services closed with the hymn, the worshipers slowly retired to their respective tents, and silence and sleep resumed their quiet empire; but there I remained, riveted to the earth, motionless, and alone. Yet not alone, for the voice of a mysterious presence kept whispering in my ear, 'flee to the fold of God!' even the monitory 'stop!' of the thrilling hymn, rung like a trumpet from heaven through the chambers of my heart. I bowed myself to the earth, and there all night long, amid the gloom of that lonely forest, and the moans of its solemn pines, gazed on the phantoms of misspent hours, imploring light to my darkened

spirit—energy to subdue its fiery passions—strength to unmask the specious vanities of the world, and to forego its momentary pleasures, for the unimaginable cycle of an eternal beatitude, till morning dawned upon my silent vigil, and found me blessed with that inward peace which seems the antepast of heaven.’

The above description has nothing in it that may not be seen at any camp-meeting, excepting the presence of the fawn; this, of course, was an unusual and, as it proved to be, an incident of peculiar interest. Still, every camp-meeting has its own incidents, and many of these are of a thrilling character.

From scenes of this kind, John Hancock, with his heart full of holy influences, would repair to the quietness of his farm, and there pursue his honest toil till the coming Sabbath, when he would be found, sometimes in the city church, the country school-house, the private dwelling, the county poor-house, proclaiming, with renewed zeal, the Gospel of the grace of God.

In early life, he was repeatedly and earnestly

solicited to devote himself entirely to the work of the holy ministry. This he did not do; and, as he desired to act conscientiously in all things, we may readily conclude that there were many and severe conflicts in his mind in reference to the matter. All the reasons which influenced him in his final decision, of course cannot now be known; but there is no doubt, that the obligations imposed upon him, at the death of his step-father, to pay legacies of a considerable amount, had great weight upon his mind. If he gave himself wholly to the ministry, he saw no prospect of meeting these demands.

He seems, therefore, to have labored for many years, as if he hoped the period was just at hand, when he would be able to give himself up to the work of God untrammelled. It was late in life, however, before that desired time arrived. In the year 1837, being then in his *sixty-first year*, and free from temporal embarrassment, he made application, contrary to the wishes of his family and friends, to the New Jersey Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, to be admitted

into that body as an itinerant minister. After mature deliberation, it was thought he was too far advanced in life to enter upon such labors and responsibilities as would be required in that position, and, while the kindest feelings were cherished towards the applicant, the application was not granted. With this decision he was grieved and dissatisfied, especially as he felt an earnest desire to be more extensively useful than he could be in his present position. Disappointed here, he concluded, after several months of consideration and prayer, that his sphere of usefulness might perhaps be enlarged, by withdrawing his formal connection from the Methodist Episcopal Church, which he did, on the 9th day of November, 1837, at the same time enjoining upon his friends, and especially his children, that they should remain where they were, unless they could find a better way, and a holier Church; and he himself took occasion, before his death, to show the sincerity of his exhortations, by returning to the Church of his early choice, whose doctrines he believed and preached while living, whose institutions he loved

and prized when dying—and leaning upon whose bosom he peacefully reposed at last.

But, notwithstanding his separation, such was the confidence reposed in him, that he continued to occupy the pulpits of the Methodist Episcopal Church with regularity. Other doors of usefulness, in the various denominations, were continually opening, all of which he joyfully entered; and when thanks were returned him, for the services he had rendered, usually responded:—"I thank you, sir, for having afforded me another opportunity to preach Jesus and the resurrection."

Coming now to his sixty-third year, a period in life when the majority of men begin to feel as if their work was drawing to a close, he seems to have renewed his strength, and, at the close of the year, makes the following minute:—

Traveled this year,..... miles	2,406
Days from home,.....	154
Held meetings,.....	161
Expenses in traveling and donations,.....	\$19 33
Received in cash and other articles,.....	14 05
	<hr/>
Expenses above receipts,.....	\$5 28

In his sixty-fourth year, traveled..... miles	1,961
Away from home,..... days	95
Preached.....sermons	111
Expenses in traveling and donations,.....	\$43 91
Received for services,.....	3 40
	<hr/>
Expenses above receipts.....	\$40 51

It will be very clearly seen from the above, that John Hancock did not eat his bread by laboring in the Christian ministry. On the contrary, his efforts were purely benevolent, and from the promptings of duty.

Pursuing these labors year after year, he was often wearied to the last extreme; so that, in passing from place to place, he would sleep upon horseback, or in his carriage, for miles together. One very dark night, his horse stopped, and, after all efforts, could be urged no further; when, getting out of his carriage, and *feeling* about to ascertain his situation, he discovered that the road passed directly along the river, without the least protection for the traveler; and had the horse taken another step, all would have been precipitated into the waters below. Amid such scenes, he labored to the close of life.

CHAPTER V.

THE BIBLE.

“ Its very name recalls
The happy hours of youth,
When, in my grandsire’s halls,
I heard its tales of truth.

I’ve seen the white hairs flow,
O’er the volume as he read,
But, that was long ago,
And the *good old man is dead!* ”

“ O, how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day.”—PSALMS 119 : 97.

“ THE excellent Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, was obliged to quit the city in consequence of increasing persecutions; he went with one of his faithful disciples to a region in the vicinity. In the cool of the evening, the bishop was walking under the shade of the magnificent trees which stood in front of his rural abode; here, he found his disciple sitting under an oak tree, leaning his head on his hand, and weeping. Then the old man said :—‘ My son, why weepest thou?’ The

disciple lifted up his head, and said:—‘ Shall I not mourn and weep, when I think of the kingdom of truth upon earth? Tempests and storms are gathering around, and will destroy it. Many of its adherents have become apostates, and have denied and abused the truth, proving that unworthy men may confess it with their lips, though their hearts are far from it. This fills my heart with sorrow, and my eyes with tears.’

Then Polycarp smiled, and answered:—‘ My dear son, the kingdom of divine truth is like unto a tree, which a countryman reared in his garden. He set the seed secretly and quietly in the ground, and left it; the seed put forth leaves, and the young tree grew up among weeds and thorns. Soon the tree reared itself above them, and the weeds died, because the shadow of the branches overcame them. The tree grew, and the winds blew on it and shook it; but its roots clung firmer and firmer to the ground, taking hold of the rocks downwards, and its branches reached unto heaven. Thus the tempest served to increase the firmness and strength of the tree. When it grew up

higher, and its shadow spread further, then the thorns and the weeds grew again around the tree; but it heeded them not in its loftiness; there it stood in calm, peaceful grandeur—a TREE OF GOD!’”

Such is the Bible—a beautiful tree, growing in our very midst, casting its refreshing shade, and bearing its life-giving fruit for all; and, though scorned by some, rejected and ridiculed by others, it stands unharmed amid all the tempests of earth and the shocks of time—THE BOOK OF GOD!

It is a pleasing truth, that all *good* men, of every name and age, love the Bible. The Bible and goodness go hand in hand. John Hancock *loved the Bible!* He loved it preëminently! From the time of his spiritual birth, to the day of his death, it was his constant companion. He read it in private upon his knees; and often, while thus engaged, light from the eternal throne broke in upon his mind. He read it constantly in his family devotions; ever regarding it as a “lamp to his feet, and a light to his path.” In

order that he might have a better understanding of the Word of God, he purchased, at an early period, of Rev. T. Ware, Coke's "Commentary on the Holy Scriptures," a large work in several volumes, the expense of which he met by making harness for Mr. Ware.

Some time after this, Clarke's "Commentary," a work of great research and learning, was published in numbers; to this, he also became a subscriber. These he studied with great diligence and profit, and from them drew, perhaps, the largest amount of his biblical knowledge. It was knowledge in which he took great delight—for it was the knowledge of God. In his preaching, the excellency of the Holy Scriptures was mostly, if not always, referred to. In the late years of his life, this was especially true. In every sermon, he drew largely from the sacred volume, and endeavored to impress upon the minds of his audience, that the Bible was unspeakably superior to every other book, indeed, the ONLY BOOK. And, while he felt that the Bible was a light to his own path, he was not satisfied to let it shine there

alone; he wished that it might beam upon all. Hence, in his travels, he was ever seeking out the destitute, and then finding some way to supply them with the Word of God. For the last few years of his life, he kept a memorandum of the persons to whom he gave Bibles and Testaments, under the following caption:—"Bibles given away, or *bread cast upon the waters.*"

In 1850, he made himself, by the payment of thirty dollars, a life member of that great Christian institution, the AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY, and, from this time, his zeal in the good cause seems, if possible, to have been greater than before. He lost no opportunity to bestow a Bible wherever he thought it would be of use, and always took care to accompany the book with some portion of scriptural advice.

In 1853, he writes to the American Bible Society, as follows:—"I thank God, I have lived to accomplish a design long cherished, of giving every one of my grandchildren a Bible of comely appearance. I wrote, and pasted on the inside of the cover of each, a few lines suited to

the age, sex, and character of each child." Some of these inscriptions are as follows:—

“ROSWELL M. HANCOCK’S BIBLE.

Search the Scriptures, read your Bible through,
Believe their precepts, love, obey them, too ; ;
From childhood up to manhood, fear the Lord,
Live in accordance with his Holy Word.”

“John Wade, Montgomery County, Vt., who died in 1849, read *his* Bible through seventy-eight times.

J. H.”

“WILLIAM F. HANCOCK’S BIBLE.

PRESENTED BY HIS GRANDFATHER, APRIL, 1853.

God of my fathers, bless the lad,
And form his soul divine,
May he with grace and love be clad,
And be a child of thine.”

“JOHN E. HANCOCK’S BIBLE.

PRESENTED BY HIS GRANDFATHER, JULY, 1853.

Search the Scriptures, read your Bible through,
Believe its precepts, love, obey them, too.

The Bible, as a book of science, is the most learned book in the world. It has God for its author, truth for its matter, and salvation for its end.

MORRIS Co., N. J.

JOHN HANCOCK.”

To a little orphan girl, who always called him grandfather, he gave a Bible with this inscription:—

“MARTHA COLE'S BIBLE.

PRESENTED TO HER BY GRANDFATHER HANCOCK, 1853.

‘Search the Scriptures.’

‘When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.’—PSALMS 27 : 10.”

Thus he passed along, through the ranks of his children's children, giving to each a copy of the book which had been to him, through a long life, above all price. These precious volumes are prized all the more, because they came from grandfather, and contain some of his own poetry addressed directly to themselves.

For several years before his death, so anxious was he that his grandchildren should not only possess the Bible, but commit portions of it to memory, it was his custom to assemble as many of them as possible at his own house on New Year's day, and have them recite, in his hearing, from its sacred pages.

On one such occasion, after they had repeated correctly the ten commandments, he pronounced upon them, as they gathered around him, the following benediction :—

“ God of my fathers, bless the lads,
And form their hearts anew ;
Bless, O my God, these little maids,
And make them Christians, too.”

On a similar occasion, in 1852, he blesses and prays for them thus :—

“ Lord, write thy law on all their hearts,
And fix it in their inward parts ;
Be thou their God, their leader be,
Through time, and through eternity.”

In 1853, after an interview of the same kind, he thus instructs them :—

“ Learn God’s commandments all by heart,
And never from his law depart ;
Believe in God, in Christ, our Lord,
Believe, obey, and love his Word,
And from his precepts never stray,
They’ll guide you to eternal day.”

These gatherings were anticipated with great interest by the little ones, and their influence will be felt through life.

On a Sabbath evening, in the month of September, 1853, he was unexpectedly called upon to fill a vacancy in the Methodist Episcopal Church, Morristown, occasioned by the indisposition of the pastor. The following sketch, prepared and published at the time in the *Christian Advocate and Journal*, will serve further to illustrate his high estimate of the Word of God, and his great willingness to preach that Word at all times:—

“THE OLD MAN'S SERMON.

It was a sermon of peculiar interest. *The subject was interesting*—The Bible—text, Luke 11 : 28 :—‘Yea, rather blessed are they which hear the Word of God, and keep it.’ He told us what the Word of God was; not the pretended revelations of the Shakers or Mormons, but the pure words of inspiration, as they are contained in our present translation of the Holy Scriptures.

He dwelt upon the great excellency of the Word of God, till his whole soul glowed and burned with the blessedness of his theme.

He referred to valuable testimony concerning the Bible from the gifted and the good. He spoke of its morals, its poetry, its history, its spirituality. 'It reveals,' said he, 'to the righteous, fullness of consolation, and to the sinner, his only way of life and hope through Jesus Christ.'

'I have lived,' said the old man, 'through a long life, and the Bible never seemed so beautiful as now.' *He told us our duty in reference to the Word of God.* 'We must hear and keep it; that is, receive it in our hearts by faith, then practice it daily in our lives. Hearing and obeying,' said he, 'are leading features in our holy religion. If all men would hear and obey that one precept of the Lord,' 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them,' 'what a happy world we should have! There would then be no need of poor-houses, or prisons, or magistrates; men would learn war no more, and all would be peaceful and serene.'

He spoke of the blessedness of those who hear and keep the Word of God. 'Blessed in this life, blessed in that to come. O,' said he, 'if you

would make your children happy, teach them to hear and keep the Word of God. Yes, teach them these lessons early. Little Fletcher, one of my grandchildren,' said the old man, 'died at the age of fourteen months, and although he could neither speak nor walk at this tender age, yet, by a little attention, I had so impressed his infant mind with sacred things, that when I asked him where God was, he would draw a sigh, then raise his little eyes and hands above, as if he would say, 'God is in heaven.' 'I have lived,' fervently exclaimed this venerable man, 'to give to each of my grandchildren a copy of the Bible, and I would rather leave them such a legacy than a hundred thousand dollars each, without it. If you would bless the world, multiply, O multiply the Scriptures. To this end, I give my money, my influence, my life.'

The preacher was interesting. He was an old man, full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, of nearly fourscore years. His hairs were gray, nay, almost white with age. His limbs were cramped with rheumatic pains. He could not stand to deliver

his message, but, like his Master in the synagogue of old, *he sat and expounded the Word of the Lord.* For half a century he had been a minister of Christ, and O, it was deeply interesting to hear this venerable and good old man, after having made the Scriptures the rule of his life for more than fifty years, now, upon the very banks of Jordan, recommend them to all, with a burning pathos which told how fully his heart felt their mysterious and wonder-working power.

The congregation was interesting. Not that it was large; it was not so large as usual, for the pastor was sick, and it was not known that there would be any to occupy his place. But the old man heard of it, and when asked if he would fill the vacancy, although the service was to be at night, and the place of holding it six miles distant from his house, he quickly answered, 'To be sure I will, for the last thing I want to do on earth is to preach Christ.' It was interesting to look around the congregation on that Sabbath evening, to see the young and old (none sleepy, none restless) hang upon the lips of this dear old

man as he spake to them so lovingly of the Book of God.

After he had closed, I was about to express the obligations we were under to him for his kindness in preaching to and for us, but he interrupted me by saying, 'I thank you, brother, for the kindness you have done me, in giving me another opportunity to preach Christ before I die.' He was about going to his carriage to return home, then after nine o'clock, the night dark, and he alone. I said, 'It will be unpleasant for you to drive so far in the dark; tarry with us for the night.' He replied, 'Those whom the Lord guides are guided well. I have no fear of accident.'"

And so it was, he reached his home in safety. God was with him!

A relative of his, a lady, knowing his devotion to the Bible cause, sent him one dozen Testaments, accompanied by the following note:—

"It affords you so much pleasure, cousin John, to be doing good in the world, I shall feel it a great satisfaction to have the privilege of helping you a little. Will you therefore, accept, for dis-

tribution, as you may think best, a dozen new Testaments; they cannot fail to prove a blessing to whomsoever given."

This donation was joyfully received, and distributed according to the wish of the donor.

What a luxury there is in doing good! This Christian lady felt it. There is the luxury of the bestowment, of the reception, of witnessing the benefit, the pleasant remembrance, and the blessed reward through all eternity. O, who would not do good, and thus make himself and his fellows happy! John Hancock was happy only when trying in some way to do good.

About a year before he died, he committed to paper the following paragraph concerning the Bible, found somewhere in the course of his reading, as containing the deep and long cherished sentiments of his own heart:—

"I want to study it, to treasure up its words in my memory, that I may be able to repeat them in my solitude, and on my bed, whether at night or in sickness. I want them in my hands, on my tongue, and in my heart. Who shall deny me

this privilege? This blessed Book ought to be owned by every man, woman, and child, upon the face of the earth—who shall wrest it away?”

Another extract, in his own hand-writing, made about the same time, from Dr. Stearns' "Address on the Bible," may, inasmuch as it clearly sets forth his own views and feelings, properly close this chapter:—

“When the cry is uttered, ‘O, earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the Lord,’ man should stand aside, and let God speak—speak to the little child—speak to the unlettered man—speak to the tired laborer turning aside from his toil—to the mother in her infant circle—to the sick man on his dying couch—aye, speak in every corner of the land, and to the heathen in the ends of the earth. Whatsoever I am, however obscure, however ignorant, I claim it as my birthright as a man, to hear God speak—to have his very words as nearly as they can be given me, in the Book where he caused them to be written. I want the volume in my hands, to turn its pages over just

as I please, to take it home with me and show it to my children."

The following letter, received since the foregoing chapter was written, is deemed worthy of insertion:—

“PLAINFIELD, N. J., 15th February, 1855.

MY DEAR BROTHER:—Father Hancock was a true lover and a diligent student of the Bible. Nothing seemed to afford him more sincere pleasure than to aid in multiplying the triumphs of that blessed Book. My earliest knowledge of him was in connection with an unusually liberal offering for Bible distribution from his family. I inquired him out, and found it quite characteristic of the source. Indeed, he ever seemed to regard himself as *a special committee* on the Bible cause in his neighborhood, and probably not a year passed without his sending to the Bible House his own gift, and such other aid as he could collect among his friends. So true was he to this, his ‘ruling passion’ for doing good, that his last remittance was received but a few weeks before his decease. Were similar zeal in

this great work manifested by others who profess to love it, our treasury would be constantly replenished, and the cry of a lost world for the bread of life would not come up in vain. But his love for the Bible was not only evinced by exertion and self-denial to send it abroad, but he taught its truths diligently to his children, and read it constantly himself. He was a person of simplicity and godly sincerity, thoroughly imbued with the words and spirit of the holy volume he so ardently loved. Though he was 'a man of one book,' in the contents of that book he was mighty. My recollection of him is as of an Israelite, indeed, and I now think of him as in the blessed company of those who 'rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.'

Very truly, yours,

GEORGE SHELDON,
Superintendent Am. Bible Soc."

CHAPTER VI.

CHARITY.

“When prophecies shall fail,
When tongues shall cease, when knowledge is no more,
And the great day is come, thou by the throne
Shalt sit triumphant.”

GLYNN.

“If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”—1 JOHN 4 : 20.

HOLY CHARITY! In a world like ours, how beautiful is this trait in human character. It is, as we gaze upon it, like a green spot in a great desert. How cheerless would earth appear without it! Let us rejoice that, sinful as our world still is, faith, hope, and *charity* yet *abide*.

It is God's loving Spirit, dwelling in the souls of men; a divine principle triumphing over self and sin. It is beautiful in its nature, in its developments, and in its victories; everywhere, and

always beautiful. It is the common inheritance of every genuine Christian. "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

In the exercise of this grace, John Hancock did not think it sufficient to regard only a certain class with favor, but embraced all. In 1849, he makes the following extract:—

"There is no particular merit in loving those who think just as we do—for it is so much like loving ourselves—it may be only loving our own opinions seen in them; but the trial is, to have our Christian brotherly affection surmount all other considerations, and still unite our hearts in love, and in fervency to those who differ from us, and who still exhibit the Christian spirit." There can be nothing more beautiful, than the exercise of this brotherly spirit among men. Earth becomes like heaven just in proportion to the prevalence of this grace. John Hancock's views, and feelings, and labors, were not confined to the narrow limits of a sect. To have our church preferences is right and proper, but in the language

of a recent popular author* :—"I believe that there is no stronger symptom of approaching wreck than when men begin to quarrel about the vessel, and lose their perception of the glory for which that vessel was made. There is no stronger proof of the very first commencement of idolatry than cleaving to the altar, contending for its forms, and forgetting that the altar was raised that there might burn and glow upon it the mingling beams of mercy and truth that have met together, and righteousness and peace that have kissed each other. What is it but Popery to magnify the sect, as if that alone were pure, and to excommunicate the sister Church because it is not altogether what it should be?"

During the last seventeen years of his life, John Hancock, like the disciples of old, "went everywhere, preaching the Word." The pulpits of the Baptist and Presbyterian churches were often occupied by him, and, with the latter denomination, in the church at Hanover, he communed

* Dr. Cumming.

with much regularity for many years. He was beloved by all.

He obeyed the divine injunction, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers;" yet it must be confessed, as will appear, he found sometimes most *ungracious angels*.

His hospitality was large; all who needed must be lodged in his house, and fed at his board: want never went from his door unsupplied.

The following article tells its own story:—An intelligent stranger is taken in—lodged and fed—is detained by storm—speaks indifferently of Religion, especially against the ministry. Some time during his stay, Mr. Hancock wrote these lines, and presented them to him:—

"THE SCEPTIC AND THE COUNTRY PRIEST.

This story is no novel, joke, or jest,
About the sceptic and the country priest.

I know a priest, of no great note or fame;
Although a priest, he don't deserve the name,—
Of the last cast between the earth and heaven,
To whom the name of sacred priest is given.
He laboring, too, as heaven designed man should,
By toil and sweat obtains a livelihood—

With Adam doomed to bear a righteous curse,
Yet feels rejoiced that matters are no worse.
Kind Providence, with an unerring hand,
Hath made him tenant on a piece of land,
With cot, to screen him from the wintry blast,
Where strangers sometimes share his poor repast.

One stormy night, a stranger, neatly clad,
Called and inquired where lodging might be had ;
The rustic priest replied without demur,
'We sometimes lodge the weary traveler.'
The storm detained him the next day and night,
And he seemed thankful at his lucky plight.
On various topics he appeared to be
Informed—save that of sound divinity,—
Of states—of men—of clime—he seemed to know
All that exists, from Maine to Mexico.
His manners, frankness and intelligence
His host esteemed sufficient recompense.
But, for some cause I had not power to trace,
He inveighed much against a priestly race,—
Whether my Levite brethren have made
Preaching salvation to lost men a trade—
Or cannot live by begging, work, or war,
And thus resolved to ride the Gospel car—
Or if they preach from motives, who can tell?
To save from sin, from misery and hell,—
Or if the man in earnest, spleen or hip,
Supposed that priests would undergird the ship,
Wo to the land! cursed with the curse of Cain,
Where priests obtain and hold the civil rein!
Without regard to rank, he did inveigh
The priests, *en masse*, of North America.

Poor priest, although assailed in his own house,
Was glad to keep as quiet as a mouse.
He thought 'twas best and wisest, in the main,
When men revile not to revile again ;
Harsh words will stir up strife, we've heard them say,
While softer words will anger turn away.
Poor priest ! he never dropped a single word
From which his rank as priest might be inferred,
But frankly shared his humble fare at best,
With ploughman's breeding, to his well-bred guest.
And when the traveler pursued his way,
The priest declined receiving any pay,—
But, as a tribute to his memory, wrote,
And gave to Cherevoy, this sonnet note.
To do him justice, as one would surmise,
He took the hint, and did apologize."

We may readily imagine the unpleasant situation of the man, who had shared the bounty of one against whom he had all the while been speaking. No wonder he apologized. These lines, so full of kindness, heaped coals of fire upon his head. After the apology, and before he left, the following lines were added, and handed to him, as a kind of postscript :—

“ ‘ Whene'er from my poor cottage, sir, you stray
In public walks, or in some lonely way,
Reflect if your poor host and hostess, then,
Are not at least as kind as *other men* :

Who for support or livelihood rely
On their own hands, and smiles of the Most High ;
Each acts the part that heaven designed they should,
By toil and sweat to gain a livelihood.
No gilded coach, to comfort or amuse,—
But country wagons, such as farmers use,
No slave attendants, nurse, cook, groom, or page,
Like those poor bondmen of the present age,
Who are, like horses, often bought and sold
For that poor trash, the petty tyrant's gold.
Don't, then, conclude that priests are any worse
Than other men, or to the world a curse—
Since they can preach full thirty years, believe,
Nor thirty dollars from the world receive,
Can lodge the stranger, and the hungry feed,
And sometimes give a dollar when there's need.

Is this the trait of priests by passion led ?
What, then, must be the trait of Christ their head—
The Godhead veiled in flesh, to bleed and die,
To save lost sinners, sir, like you and I ?

Master Supreme, by thy almighty grace,
Fasten the truth like nails in a sure place.'

This, to say the least, was a most happy method of conveying a reproof, for the unchristian spirit which had been manifested ; and it is very much doubted, if the sceptic ever indulged in such reflections, until he was, at least, well assured of the *ground he occupied*.

Hundreds, at different times, were thus entertained. The best part of his hospitality was the pleasant manner in which he bestowed it.

In 1830, while a member of the New Jersey Legislature, he placed in the hands of his friend, D. Fenton, of Trenton, a sum of money, such as he could afford, with the following directions:—

“I leave a small donation in your care,
To each dear friend impart the following share :
Give fifty cents to B. McClennyhan ;
Fifty to him who spreads the Gospel plan ;
To Brother Williams, fifty more be given,
It will assist him on his way to heaven ;
To Mary Updike give just fifty more,
And with the rest, buy bread to feed the poor.
'Tis part of what my God to me hath lent,
To pay a part of my arrears for rent :
If I could see my present way more clear,
I'd dry the widow's and the orphan's tear.
But I'm insolvent, and shall ever be,
Bankrupt in time and in eternity.
O, may propitious heaven my debts forgive,
That I, henceforth, may to God's glory live.”

His care for the sick, the widow, and the orphan, commenced with his conversion, and continued through all his life. In times of sickness, such was the confidence men reposed in him, he

was often admitted to families of high worldly standing, when no other minister or religious person could gain admission. In these places he fearlessly and faithfully discharged his duty.

He sought out the poor, especially in winter, and, after helping them as far as he could, solicited aid from others, for the purpose of relieving their wants more fully. There were several poor women, who looked to him solely for their supplies, through the inclement season of the year.

On one occasion, he sent a letter to a friend, asking assistance for an afflicted family, closing with these lines:—

“The blessings God to you and I hath sent,
For some good purpose have to us been lent;
Since heaven to us has spread such bounteous store,
Let's pay our *interest*, if we pay no more.”

He felt that all we possess is from God; and as we think it right and proper, when we use the funds of our fellow-men, to pay a lawful interest for the same, so it is equally, if not more obligatory upon us, to pay interest on the great and

manifold gifts of God. A donation to any good cause, is not *giving* simply, but is the payment of our *lawful interest*, on property *loaned* us by the Lord.

He often regrets that his circumstances were such, that he could do no more. With such feelings, he writes:—

“Whene’er I hear of human wo,
At home, abroad, of friend, or foe,
With sympathy my bowels move.
If not with holy, God-like love.
My means are small, I can’t relieve
All sufferings over which I grieve,
But still, with misery, aim to share
The little trusted to my care.
My heart is hard, my purse is low,
But still I sigh at human wo.”

One morning, in the chilly month of November, he walked out some distance from home, meditating on the words, “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.” Passing a small cottage, he says:—“I heard the noise of children crying; I passed by, halted, hesitated, felt diffident, and reluctant to enter. I turned about, knocked, and went in. Two children were

sitting in the corner, one of them with an infant in its lap. A young woman, twenty-four years of age, was lying on a rug before the fire, shaking with the ague; said she had had the disease three weeks, her mother had gone out to labour. I asked her if she had ever felt the necessity of seeking the Lord? She answered, 'No!' I asked, 'Do you not believe that you are a sinner?' She answered, 'Yes!' I exhorted her to seek the Lord by prayer and faith in Christ—prayed, and left her in tears." Thus he went about doing good to the souls and bodies of all within his reach. How beautiful the foot-prints of such a man. In 1853, the year before he died, he copied the following lines from an old hymn book; they are inserted here, as expressing his own views on the subject of Christian charity:—

"That man may breathe, but never lives,
Who much receives, but nothing gives,
Whom none can love, whom none can thank,
Creation's blot, creation's blank.

But, he who marks from day to day,
By generous acts, his radiant way,
Treads the same path his Saviour trod,
The path to glory and to God."

“Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.” But, “now *abideth faith, hope, CHARITY*, these three; but the greatest of these is *CHARITY*.” “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”

CHAPTER VII.

MISCELLANEOUS.

“With him no melancholy void,
No moment lingered unemployed,
Or unimproved below.”

C. WESLEY.

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.”—ECCLES. 9 : 10.

JOHN HANCOCK was a busy man ; ever at work, head and hands and heart were all and always at it. Out upon his farm before the morning sun, and then, when the evening shades appeared, was either off on some mission of mercy, or else, seated beneath his own humble roof, with pen in hand, writing down some of his day thoughts, or applying himself diligently to the productions of others. He would be employed. Work was his motto. He loved it. Farming, preaching, writing, each had a portion of his time ; and through all his writings there is a vein of cheerful piety, pleasing to young and old. Whatever subject employs his pen, he never loses sight of the great end of man.

It is proposed, in this chapter, to give some additional articles from his pen, believing they will impart a clearer view of the peculiarities of his mind than anything which can be said without them.

With him, business and Religion were never separated. On one occasion, a creditor called upon him for settlement; after paying the bill, he presented the following lines:—

“When I and all mankind are called to pay
Our last account, at the great judgment day,
Gold will be dross, there's nought but Jesus' blood
Will cancel sin, or satisfy our God;
May you and I, through grace, have all forgiven,
And find our way to holiness and heaven.”

Having written a letter to a gentleman on business, and fearing that both their minds might be too much absorbed in the world, he adds a post-script:—

“Time, like a rapid current rolls,
Earth is but vanity,
Vast the concerns of deathless souls,
In great eternity.”

A beautiful instance of the blending of Religion, business, and state affairs, is presented in a

letter addressed to his wife, while he was a member of the New Jersey Legislature. Perhaps this letter, though intended for his family alone, would of itself as fully represent the man as anything that could be said. The letter, as intimated above, was strictly private, yet its publication here cannot fail to do good. It is dated:—

“TRENTON, Jan. 22d, 1829.

MY DEAR PHEBE:—I have been waiting with anxiety to hear from home, but have received no intelligence, either directly or indirectly. I feel desirous to hear from you and from the children. Let me know if any of our neighbors have sickened or died. Let me know, more especially, the state of your souls; how the work of God prospers, and the state of society in Morristown, Whippany, and Columbia; whether Esq. P. and C. R. are seeking the Lord, or whether it is but a dream. My best wishes to the Preachers, to the Societies, and my affection to you and my dear children. My prayer and heart's desire to God is, that you all may be led to seek after and find the love of God and be saved.

To John Wesley Hancock.—My Son :—I want you to draw in the large stack of oats after a few drying days. I want you to make my brooms two-thirds flat. I wish you to kill the hogs, and hang up the pork when you think best. I want you to give the sled two good coats of paint, and put it under shelter; and, *above all*, I want you to attend to the *worship of God in the family* and in your closet. Try to get the children as often as you can to preaching and prayer meetings; impress the truth upon their minds; they are fallen sinners, and the sinner must be born again; pray until the Spirit of God comes down upon your souls; seek God by faith and prayer.

When the Legislature will adjourn, is to us unknown. Some think not before March, some think sooner. There is much business, many petitions, many remonstrances, many conflicting interests, different views, and many office-seekers. How different that kingdom which is not of this world:—

Many seek the honor that by man is given,
Few seek the honor that comes down from heaven.

We are agreeably situated at our lodgings:—

The soul's affairs, the great concerns of life,
Are not forgotten, midst this worldly strife.

I have frequent opportunities of hearing Bro. Lybrand, an Israelite, indeed, in whom there is no guile; a workman that needeth not to be ashamed. I have preached (or talked) twice to the people in this town. On Sunday, the 11th, Bro. M. and I were in Philadelphia, where I preached thrice:—

With rapid strides, midst hopes and fears,
I fast approach my three score years;
All past is only like a theme
Of fancied joys in midnight dream.

But vast the scenes that me await,
In an unbounded future state;
These scenes, dear children, you and I,
Without discharge, must shortly try.

O live life's momentary space,
To seek your God and find his grace;
Then, when death cuts these cords of love,
We only die to live above.

I transmit you a line I handed to a blooming youth, dated Jan. 16th:—

The sun of Life doth oft appear,
In an unclouded atmosphere;

But, O how oft the clouds arise,
To darken the serenest skies.

Man's joys and hopes, like morning light,
Oft end in shades of darkest night ;
Youth, in the midst of health and bloom,
Soon withers in the silent tomb.

Affectionately, I remain,
Your husband and father,
JOHN HANCOCK."

While in the Legislature, a bill was introduced to legalize horse-racing. He felt it his duty to set his face against it. Hence, he wrote, and most likely delivered before that body, the following lines :—

"An organized, well-regulated bill,
That leads directly to the gates of hell.
Delusive sport! Such waste of wealth and time
Amounts, at least, to pleasurable crime.
I would that men would leave this pleasing strife,
And run the race for everlasting life,
Employ those noble powers, that God hath given,
To seek His grace and make their way to heaven ;
The blest result of such a course would be
Reward in heaven, throughout eternity."

It would seem, from the following lines upon the same subject, that efforts were not wanting to

persuade him to cease hostilities to the measure. He made this reply, worthy the imitation of all our legislators:—

“Should I, friend Stephens, lose my *sight*,
Then I might do what you think right ;
But while I *see*, I think it will
Be wrong to pass the horse-race bill.
Should you conclude to run the race
For everlasting life by grace,
I humbly hope, desire, and pray
That God may help you on your way.”

At the same session, a bill was presented to prevent the running of steamboats on the Sabbath. This being opposed by some, he cried out in the ears of the astonished legislators:—

“The great Jehovah gave to man his law,
On Sinai’s mount, to keep the world in awe,
His lightnings flashed, his thunders shook the world,
When God to man his majesty unfurled.
Who, then, dare give to man a *right to break*
The laws which God alone had power to make ?”

When the report of the committee on habitual drunkards was read, he adds:—

“Pity the man, whose case is thus defined,
The most degraded of the human kind ;
Drunkards beware, behold the die is cast,
You live abhorred, and die disgraced at last.”

When the Legislature closed, he wrote a farewell to its members, and to the city of Trenton, which he delivered in the Methodist Episcopal Church, Feb. 28th, 1829. Did space allow, it would be interesting to insert the whole in these pages; a part only can be subjoined. After speaking of his early life, his cottage home, his freedom from ambition, or desire to mingle in the affairs of public life, he continues:—

“ To God and man my ignorance I own;
With grief and shame, my errors I bemoan ;
O, Son of God, I on thy bosom fall,
And humbly pray thee to forgive them all.

A friendly hint I fain would leave behind,
To those who have with me in council joined :
The man entrusted with his country's cause,
To fill its councils and enact its laws,
Fills a high station, where example would,
Well ordered, be the means of doing good.
Where gifts and grace in unison combine,
They thus conspire to make the statesman shine.
O God, in us light up the lamp of grace,
And make us lights to Adam's fallen race!
And now, my brethren, who lay near my heart,
The time has come when you and I must part ;
I've taught you, brethren, in my feeble plight,
That God's own house is my supreme delight ;
I leave the State, and hope to take the field,
And, in my way, the Spirit's sword to wield ;

I steer my course towards the polar star,
Where I shall shortly be engaged in war,
On hostile plains, where holy heroes hath
With hell contended for the Christian faith.
There I've contended, too, 'tis strange to tell,
In battles fought, close by the gates of hell.
But, O what matters what befalls me here,
If, saved from sin, I at God's bar appear ;
And while my lamp emits a glimmering light,
May yours, well filled with grace, shine clear and
bright.

I'll live by faith, and urge my passage through ;
Farewell, dear friends, I bid you all adieu !”

While every page of this volume develops the great truth that John Hancock was a Christian, it must not be forgotten that he was also a patriot. Born in 1776, bearing the name of a most distinguished statesman, and living in patriotic times, how could he be otherwise. For many years, it was his custom to fit up a grove of his own, not far from his house, so as to accommodate a large congregation, and hold religious patriotic meetings on the 4th of July. The first meeting of this kind which he ever held, resulted in the conversion of a young man, who soon became, and¹ up to this time continues, a useful

minister of the Gospel in the Baptist Church. In the last meeting held, he was assisted by that great minister of Christ, Rev. Lawrence McCombs. Sometimes on these occasions, he delivered patriotic addresses, mingled with religious exercises.

The following is an extract from an address, delivered at one of these meetings by him, July 4th, 1815:—

“BELOVED BRETHREN AND FELLOW-CITIZENS :
Having obtained help of God, we continue to the present time ; and among the providential dealings of Almighty God with the nations of the earth, there is no event more plainly demonstrating the great truth, that the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and giveth them to whom He will, than the political existence of the American Republic. There is no national blessing more loudly calling for our humble acknowledgments and adoration, than the establishment and preservation of the rights of man in this growing nation.”

Then, making allusion to the great revolutionary struggle for independence, and especially to the character of the conflict, he continues:—"How wide the contrast, how unequal the contest which secured victory?"

When we view the contest, to whom shall we ascribe the glory?

Shall vain man, because thus favored, think highly of himself? No! Let us adopt the spirit of our gallant WASHINGTON, who, distrusting his own ability, implored the assistance of Omnipotence; and, with the valiant PERRY, let us ascribe the victory added to our arms to the Almighty; or, adopt the language of the Psalmist on a similar occasion, 'For by thee have I run through a troop, and by my God have I leaped over a wall. He teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight; I have pursued mine enemies, and destroyed them, and turned not again until I had consumed them; thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies, then did I beat them as the small dust of the earth, I did stamp them as the mire of the street, and did spread them abroad.'

If, then, brethren, the Most High ruleth over the kingdoms of men, and giveth them to whom he will—if he giveth a land to a peculiar people, on whom He chooseth to confer temporal favors; let us, in the language of the Psalmist, exultingly exclaim:—‘O give thanks unto the Lord of lords, for his mercy endureth forever; to Him that smote Egypt in their first-born, and brought up Israel from amongst them, who slew famous kings and gave their land for an heritage (*unto this Republic*), who remembered us in our low estate, and hath redeemed us from our enemies, who giveth food to all flesh, for his mercy endureth forever.’

It becomes us as a nation, brethren, to remember with gratitude, and to observe the day that gave us birth as a day of worship and adoration to Almighty God, who delivered Israel out of Egypt. He commanded Israel, ‘Remember this day in which ye came out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.’

We know of no reason, why nations, enjoying similar blessings, are not under similar obligations to keep the anniversary of their national

deliverance. If we cannot heartily approve the manner in which our birth-day is kept, we cannot totally condemn the lovers of a republican government and of equal rights, for wishing to keep alive the spirit of national liberty.

Let us, as Christians, set an example, and show that we can love God, and love our country also.

Finally, brethren, we are once more permitted to return to our farms, to our mechanical employments, our merchandise and commerce, our civil rights, and, more than all, our religious privileges; let us not, therefore, be so unwise, while enjoying temporal liberty, as to neglect the best of all liberty—the liberty of the sons of God—‘for if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free, INDEED.’

Let us remember that the political existence of this government does not solely, but subordinately, depend upon the use of arms.

One moral virtue is worth more than ten rifles.

One Christian grace is worth more than a score of cannons.

One act of faith will subdue more enemies than a train of flying artillery.

Further, let us beware of that spirit of rankling discontent, and ambitious thirst for power, which is the offspring of pride, and likely in time to subvert the best of all earthly governments.

Let us not forget to obey the voice and commandments of the Lord our God; and while it is our prerogative to nominate and elect our own rulers, let the wise, the republican, the truly pious, or, at least, the virtuous and moral be the objects of our choice, that they may seek the welfare of the nation, and rule in the fear of God. 'Happy is that people that is in such a case, yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.' "

On the 4th of July, 1817, he addressed the multitude assembled, thus:—

"FELLOW CITIZENS:—While the dupes of tyranny patiently submit to the hand of oppression, or the more miserable slaves of despots are groaning under their pitiable fate, the free sons of Columbia once more hail the day that gave their nation birth, and restored to them the rights of man—rights which every American citizen

knows how to value—the right of sovereignty vested in the people.

Although we have abundant cause of humiliation, thousands of our native-born citizens, as well as European emigrants, having suffered to an unparalleled degree, yet we have abundant cause to bless God, that, in addition to this calamity, we have not been cursed with a despotic ruler—a host of imperial lords, an established church, or a code of unjust laws.

How highly favored are we as a nation; here, no mercenary, absolute, or petty tyrant, can rob the meanest citizen (the poor African excepted) of his rights or privileges; here, every ruler holds his office for a limited period, and is promoted or discontinued at the will of the majority, without dread of resentment or injury to reputation.

Let it be the laudable ambition of every American to support the present form of government.

Let it be the prayer of every Christian, that God would bless those in authority, and prosper the nation.

Let it be the wish of every heart—long live the American Republic—may it exist till sun and moon shall rise and set no more.

Impressed with a sense of our high privileges, and knowing the source from whence they come, we think it proper to spend this day in worship to Almighty God.

I am truly sensible, that political subjects do not well comport with the office of a Gospel minister, and I rarely, if ever, touch them, except upon occasions like the present. Many good men feel a total indifference in the affairs of State; but we are taught, 'when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice.'

Would we have righteous men to rule over us, let us come forward, like good citizens, and promote good men to office.

Religion should not make us negligent. A lazy man, we all agree, can hardly be called a Christian: 'he that will not work, shall not eat;' 'he that provideth not for his own household, hath denied the faith;' 'be not slothful in business.' If all this care for domestic life, why not some care

for civil and political life—if so much care for an individual, why not some care for the nation?

But the *great* concern of every Christian is, how he shall be delivered from sin, and fitted to live in another life. Such men, and such only, can be the real benefactors of mankind.

Wisdom is better than weapons of war.

We told you on a former occasion, the continuance of this Republic did not solely, but subordinately, depend on the use of arms. Benhadad, with his thirty and two kings that helped him, was drinking himself drunk in his pavilion when Ahab fell upon him and slew him with a great slaughter. We told you how Belshazzar was feasting with a thousand of his lords, when Darius, the Median, entered Babylon and took possession of the kingdom. We told you, likewise, how party spirit was reposing its weary head on the downy pillow of domestic callings—how we saw our markets filled with foreign merchandise, and the products of domestic agriculture; but all these were no security against future calamities.

However little these observations, coming from an illiterate, obscure, and unpopular character were regarded, one year's sad experience have taught us they were true.

One year ago, the products of the earth were almost a drug; but, in a few months, by an adverse Providence, almost every necessary of life was raised to nearly a double value.

Where, then, is the heart that does not feel its dependence on that God who feeds the ravens, and the young lions, when they roar for lack of food.

To this God, brethren, whose perfections are infinite, let us devote this day, and teach our children, through coming generations, to devote it unto God in religious worship.

And our brethren in the ministry, who, we humbly trust, act with a single eye to advance the kingdom of the Redeemer, we hope, while you preach Jesus and the resurrection to fallen man, and while you, with all the pious of every name, offer up your prayers for the extension of the far more glorious kingdom of God, that you will

pray for the salvation of all men, and especially for those in authority, that our land may become Immanuel's land, a mountain of holiness, and a praise in the whole earth."

On the 4th of July, 1833, he delivered a prayer, part of which is here appended :—

"Great King of kings, and Lord of lords most high,
Thee we adore, as Sovereign, Deity ;
Help us with reverence to approach thy throne,
By prayer to make our wants and wishes known.
O, may an humble, holy, filial fear,
Keep us in awe, and make our hearts sincere ;
With self-abasement at thy feet we fall,
And the Great Parent of all good extol.
Lord, we confess, our sins and evils hath
Deserved thy curse, and merited thy wrath ;
We would approach thee, through thy suffering Son,
And ask for mercy, through what He hath done ;
O send thy Spirit from thy courts above,
And fill each heart with humble, holy love.
May he, who fills the Presidential chair
Of these United States, thy blessing share ;
May all our Senators of God be taught,
With wisdom, meekness, grace, may they be fraught.
Bless all our Congressmen, of every age,
May each become the Christian and the sage ;
May the State Legislatures always be
Composed of men of pure philanthropy ;

May all who do the sword of justice bear
Keep the transgressors of our laws in fear ;
May vice no more be found with outstretched hand,
And shameless glory stalking through the land.
May all our officers in peace and war,
Like WASHINGTON, be men of faith and prayer ;
May no exclusive rights, or selfish claim,
Be sought, or held, by party, sect, or name.
May doctors, lawyers, priests, wise men and fools,
Statesmen, aspirants, and aspirants' tools,
Landlords, tenants, artists, and merchants be
Kept on a level with the yeomanry.

May the time come when it shall not be told,
That men, like horses, can be bought and sold,
Nor the mock boast be heard of liberty,
Where men are kept in abject slavery.

O may our land a holy mount become,
A refuge for mankind, the stranger's home,
The freeman's glory, though the tyrant's hate,
A sample for the world to imitate.

O, do thou, Lord of hosts, the King of kings,
Spread o'er this nation thy Almighty wings ;
May every mortal reverence and obey,
And yield submission to thy rightful sway.

And now Almighty, wise, heart-searching God,
Our sins of thought, desire, of deed and word,
For Jesus' sake, we humbly pray, forgive,
Let penitent, returning sinners live.

If this last plea with thee should not prevail,
Our fondest hopes of happiness must fail ;
May we not hope it will, it surely can,
Thou canst be just, and save believing man.

Now, to the King Eternal, let there be
Ascribed dominion, might, and majesty ;
Let every mortal, in submission, then,
With heart and voice respond a loud AMEN.

It is presumed, upon a careful review of the sentiments of this prayer, most, if not all, will join in the earnest and heart-felt response—Amen—and Amen.

Turning from the patriotism of John Hancock, let us view him in the social circle. One day he was called upon by a young gentleman, to know if he could celebrate a marriage, at a stated time ; he replied in the affirmative. When the appointed hour arrived, the blushing couple stood before him, to be united in the holy bonds of wedlock ; all arranged, he commenced with great solemnity, addressing the gentleman as follows :—

“ Will you, kind Sir, at God’s command,
Take her, you hold by the right hand,
To be your lawful wife ;
And love her, keep her, sick, or well,
And leaving all others, with her dwell,
Till death shall end your life ? ”

This promised, he turned to the lady :—

“And will you, Miss, all men forsake,
And this man for your husband take,
And love with heart sincere;
Revere, obey his precepts, too,
Keep him at all times, and prove true,
Till death shall part you here?”

This being promised, he concludes:—

“In consequence of what's been done,
You are no longer two, but one,
In purpose and in heart;
I now pronounce you man and wife,
What God hath joined, nor man, nor strife,
Ever asunder part.”

The following prayer was offered, at this time,
or on some similar occasion:—

“Come, Jesus, to our wedding feast,
O deign to be our royal guest;
Come from thy hallowed courts above,
And make our feast a feast of love.

One ray of light and life divine
Will cheer us more than Cana's wine;
Lord, in our midst, do thou appear,
And gladden us while we are here.”

About this time he wrote, but whether he ever delivered, is not certain, the following:—

"SERMON.

'Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.'—COL. 3 : 19.

'And the wife see that she reverence her husband.'
—EPI. 5 : 33.

Few topics occupy the pulpit less
Than those contained in my designed address ;
Few duties are more forcibly enjoined
Than those contained in my two texts combined ;
Those duties, then, as I those duties scan
I shall exhibit in the following plan :

In the *first place*, 'tis my design to show
The various causes of connubial wo.

Some wed for gold, and are by Mammon bound,
They, rightly speaking, wed a thousand pound ;
But she who weds the miser's purse, I'm told,
Weds not the man, but only weds his gold ;
Wedded for life, by a delusive fate,
Not with affection, but with mutual hate.

Some wed for beauty—beauty of the face,
Perhaps a mind that's unadorned by grace ;
Beauty, like flowers, whose native hue at sight
Attracts attention, and affords delight,
But, void of fragrance, on inspection prove
Devoid of charms to disappointed love.

Some, crossed in love, in sad despair are led,
Turn maniacs, or hastily are wed ;

In disappointment, then, with mournful stride,
They spend their days, a living suicide.

Some wed, a father's counsel to fulfill,
But are not wedded of their own free will;
But he or she, who weds to please a friend,
Will not be pleased for wedding at the end.

Another cause why misery and strife
Exist between the husband and the wife:
Some men are churls, like one of ancient fame;
Folly is with them, NABAL is their name. •
Puffed up with wealth, but with ill-nature more,
Just like their sullen type in days of yore;
Churlish, they must be spoken to in a tone
Like vassals use, around a tyrant's throne;
And true affection, while it might be found
In tigers, cannot in *such hearts* abound.

A wife's ill-nature is another source
Whence harsh contentions oft arise, of *course*;
She, with her scolding, like the ceaseless sun,
Doth, in her daily course, unwearied run,
Till wife, and home, devoid of every grace,
Becomes unloving, is an irksome place;
The husband seeks a shelter from the strife,
In any place, beyond a scolding wife.

One reason more I'll give, let it suffice,
To show whence human miseries arise;
The lack of *grace* to regulate the soul,
And all the passions of the mind control;
For he, that's guided by no better light
Than sinful *self*, will not be led aright.

I've shown the causes whence originate
Jars and contentions in the married state;
We now shall turn from where such scenes prevail,
And sing to all a much more pleasing tale.

My second proposition shall be this:
To point the way to matrimonial bliss.

Husband, like Christ, the way, the truth, the life,
My text *commands* that you shall love your wife;
Let no harsh temper or invective slip,
Or acrimonious word escape your lip,
Nor wound the feelings of a bosom friend,
On whose good-will your present joys depend,
Let her possess your heart, that she, in fine,
May round that heart with true affection twine.

My text requires, as must to all appear,
That wives their husbands should as lords revere,
Should show respect, like Sarah, in a word,
Who reverently called her husband lord;
The husband's heart, thus drawn, will, in return,
Towards his wife with warm affection burn.

Let husbands love, let wives revere, or, next,
Obey the holy precepts of my text;
Let a desire to please in each be found,
Let acts of kindness mutually abound;
For unions, formed by such endearing love,
Are near allied to those which reign above.

When fortune fails, and health, and many friends,
Such holy unions make the best amends:

One look of pity of more avail will prove
Than healing balms, from those we do not love.

- Let marriage unions always be combined
Of the same rank and ornament of mind ;
Nor lay the ground, in earnest or in mirth,
For *one* to boast of their superior birth.

To crown the whole, the sum of all is this :
Let each obtain the joys of heavenly bliss,
Let their religious views likewise accord,
Their faith the same in Jesus Christ the Lord ;
Then, like the Church, united to her God,
Redeemed from sin, and washed through Jesus' blood,
Joyful they'll live in harmony and love,
Then live forever in the Church above.

Let me, by way of *application*, ask,
Do each, obediently, perform their task ?
Do husbands love their wives with hearts sincere,
Do wives their husbands as their lords revere ?

'Tis God commands, to Him your homage pay,
And now the precept cheerfully obey ;
O bear in mind, the day of doom draws near,
When all before the judgment must appear,
To hear the welcome plaudit, ' *Come ye blest,*'
Or else their doom, ' *Depart from endless rest.*'
O God, for Jesus' sake, thy grace impart,
And write thy truth on every human heart ;
Give us the evidence of sins forgiven,
And may we live, and die, in hope of heaven."

To say nothing of the poetry, there is surely much good sense contained in the above sermon, and its introduction here is especially appropriate, because the subject is seldom discussed in the pulpit. Many, perhaps, will smile at the plain and unvarnished manner in which the truth is presented, but beneath the smile there will be a secret conviction that, in all these things, OLD FATHER HANCOCK was certainly RIGHT.

He generally wrote mildly; but, when the cause of truth demanded, could sharpen his pen with withering irony! Hearing that a professedly good man had said "there was no harm in *dancing*, and that we *sinned* in our *prayers*," he writes:—

"If it's no sin for men to *dance*,
 And sin for men to pray,
 We'd best *stop praying*, then, and *prance*
 Our *precious time* away."

The following, growing out of the idea advanced by some, that sin is necessary to humility, is of the same ironical character:—

"SIN MAKES HUMBLE.

If little sins beget humility,
 The more we sin, the humbler we shall be;

If so, 'tis best to do the worst we can,
 Since sin will only make an humble man.

If grace makes proud, or teaches men to scoff,
 The less we have, the better we are off ;
 If so, 'tis best that men should have no grace,
 Since, in the end, its absence will abase."

Equally caustic are the following lines, written on

"FINDING A WALKING-STAFF AND PRESENT-
 ING IT TO ITS OWNER.

I found this staff, where, two o'clock, one night,
 I saw a hen-thief make a speedy flight ;
 I thought, perhaps, the unexpected fray
 Had made him drop or cast his staff away ;
 And my conclusion was, the owner then
 Was the same man that caught my *old white hen*.
 Next time you visit hen-roosts, be so kind
As not to leave your walking-staff behind."

Having been much annoyed in the Whippany M. E. Church with the conduct of a young man of respectable appearance, who was in the habit of cutting and otherwise defacing the seats, he resolved to administer a rebuke. Accordingly, at the close of a public meeting, a large audience being present, he read the following, entitled :—

“THE MODERN WHIPPANY GENTLEMAN.

In youth, he learned to read and write,
And, when full grown, became *polite* ;
And one would judge, though he was poor,
He must be skilled in literature ;
His manners, too, if he might tell,
Would scarce admit a parallel.
Thus graced, with men, he long has passed
A gentleman, of the first cast ;
And when in public he appears,
He's like a sage of riper years ;
Sometimes in church he takes his place,
Where Christians meet to seek God's grace,
And there performs his noble feats,
By cuts and scribbles on the seats,
And, if you think I'm telling lies,
Look on the seats before your eyes !”

He was quick in discovering any innovations upon old and established customs in the Church, and, when circumstances demanded, was not slow to lift up his voice against them.

He regarded the sale of seats, yet modern among us, as such an innovation ; hence the following article, entitled :

“FREE SEATS IN THE CHURCH.

Respect to persons here should ne'er be shown,
Each man should sit as though it were his own ;

The rich and poor should meet, and pray and hear,
 And no man dread, and nothing have to fear.
 The man who works for fifty cents a day
 Should have a seat, though he has naught to pay,
 And she that scarce has bread enough to eat,
 In God's own house should always have a seat.
 God's house and grace, without specific sum,
 Should be enjoyed by all who choose to come.
 Come, then, and hear, without debate or strife,
 The Word of God, and seek eternal life."

As he was accustomed to express himself strongly upon those matters which he regarded as wrong, offense was sometimes given; this always grieved him, and he was prompt to confess his errors, as the following lines will show:—

“AN APOLOGY.

Has my unguarded tongue, without pretense,
 To my dear friend, Kirkpatrick, given offense,
 When shall I learn that precept from above,
 ‘Be wise as serpents, harmless as the dove.’
 O how unlike that declaration, Lord,
 ‘The perfect man offendeth not in word;’
 Let all thy censures fall upon my pate,
 Religion and God's Word exonerate.
 Like Romans in defeat, I hope at last
 To learn true wisdom from my errors past.”

He knew that the law of love was powerful,

and tried at all times to be governed by it. Sometimes he was called upon to stand as mediator between contending parties, to calm, if possible, the troubled waters of discontent, and cool the fiery elements of debate and strife. On one such occasion, he writes the following soothing words:—

“ TO A MAN IN A CONTROVERSY.

A quiet spirit can do more, by far,
Than Roman Cæsar's by the art of war,
And one soft word can by its power control
The fiercer passions of the human soul.”

Had this principle always governed the polemics of our land, there had been no truth in or cause for John Hancock's writing the following article:—

“ MODERN ORTHODOXY ;

OR, IS CHRIST DIVIDED ?

Lo ! every sect and every man
Claims orthodoxy for his plan,
Thinks and maintains, with all his might,
Others are wrong, and I am right,
And thus, while earnestly engaged,
A holy war is quickly waged ;

Each means to fight, and fight till he
Exterminates all heresy.

Hail! mighty heroes in this war,
Speed on your Juggernautic car,
With party banners wide unfurled,
Drive *all* Religion from the world."

He was a lover of peace, and strove in all possible ways to promote it; but, much as he loved this beautiful trait in human character, he did not think it should be sought by the sacrifice of duty. He therefore boldly reproved sin, though such reproof might for the time produce discord. He remembered the divine command, "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him." The following lines were written on seeing a company of young persons engaged in

"PLAYING CARDS.

Time is a jewel, which God has kindly given
That we may seek and find our way to heaven;
But thoughtless men believe it is no crime
To spend that jewel in some vain pastime.
I saw one eve, as I passed through the street,
A social circle round a table set;
From all appearance, I believed they were
Engaged at CARDS, and not in humble prayer.

Then I reflected, as I passed along,
How great the folly of this heedless throng;
And millions more thus throw their time away,
In sinful pleasures, or in childish play,
While God they neither serve, believe nor fear,
Till death arrests them in their wild career.
In that dread hour, the guilty sinner's cry
Is, 'Sinful wretch, I'm not prepared to die.'
Sure, that's not harmless, then, which leads to harm,
And in death's hour produces dread alarm;
Those recreations, too, which murder time,
In God's own judgment, all amount to crime."

As Father Hancock's propensity for writing was known far and near, many sent their albums to secure articles from his pen.

In these he always wrote. The following was composed for a lady, who had just married a Missionary of the Cross, with whom she was soon to sail for China, there to labor in the cause of God.

"Eliza, go, and China's daughters tell,
How Jesus died to save from sin and hell,
Bid them renounce their idols, pray, believe,
And endless life through Jesus Christ receive.
The story ne'er wears out, it grows not old,
Though twice ten thousand times the story's told.
Tell it while living, and when dying,—dead,
Your life will tell it, though your spirit's fled.

May He, whom earth and winds and seas obey,
Protect and guide you safely on your way,
And when He wakes the nations under ground,
May you and I with the redeemed be found !”

For another he wrote as follows :—

“ Where'er your mind may rest or rove,
On earthly objects, earthly love,
Whate'er delight you hope to find,
To satisfy your youthful mind,
Whatever art, or science taught,
However well your mind is fraught,
With wisdom, wit, with pride or power,
All, all may perish in an hour.
Should you inquire what you should do,
What science or what art pursue,
To your inquiry I would move,
You seek true wisdom from above.
If all the knowledge known or read,
About the living or the dead,
With the great mystery of the Cross
Be once compared, it is but dross.
This story runs through every age,
In Sacred Writ through every page.
Be it your study and your care,
To seek for grace by faith and prayer.
One wonder more I fain would tell,
We sinners yet are out of hell.”

To show still further his disposition to write
in his favorite way, upon every subject, an article

is here inserted, of no value in itself, but which produced, at the time written, quite an excitement in the neighborhood, and even found its way to distant newspapers. It has been suggested that its introduction here will be, to many, like meeting with an old and pleasant acquaintance. In the year 1828, being under the necessity of paying portions of the legacies ordered by his stepfather, and not possessing the funds, he was obliged to sell part of his property for that purpose. In order to attract attention and give publicity to this sale, he wrote the following

“ADVERTISEMENT.

If God permit, the undersigned will
Expose for sale, not far from Bottle hill,
March the third, eighteen hundred twenty-eight,
At ten o'clock, for one would be too late,
Hogsheads, and barrels, small wheels, pails, and tubs,
Two hundred spokes, and forty wagon hubs,
Some flour, some wool that's black, and some that's
white,
With articles too tedious to recite.
One hundred bushels of good corn, or more,
Which will be shell'd, and lying on the floor;
One hundred bushels of potatoes, too,
The Foxite kind, as good as ever grew.

One new, well finished, wood-spring riding chair,
And one, but little or no worse for wear ;
Oats by the hundred bushel, or retail,
Can now or hence be had, at private sale.
Two thousand brooms, made up in various modes,
Will be for sale, for sweeping men's abodes ;
One ton of my first quality of hay,
Akin for fragrance to the flowers of May.
Ten hams, as good as Jersey need afford,
And fit to set before an English lord ;
Eight quarters of good beef, stall-fed, not old,
And good as any that's in common sold.
Five scant half-acre lots of turf, that's good,
Near where Ben. Hoit pursues his livelihood ;
They join the road that leads from Morristown
To fair Columbia's village of renown.
Three lots of boards, in feet, full many a score,
Seasoned, and suited for a kitchen floor,
Three cows, no calves, two horses, but no hogs,
One dozen sheep, and *half a dozen dogs.*"

Every body read the advertisement, and, on the day of sale, large multitudes attended. Some doubted whether all the articles mentioned were in possession, thinking that some of them had merely been inserted to make up the rhyme ; but John Hancock was a man of truth ; each article mentioned was produced and sold in order, the excitement increasing until the last, when the

juvenile portion of the multitude gave three earnest and hearty cheers, for "*half a dozen dogs*," and thus concluded the poetic sale.

A Newark paper having published the advertisement as a curiosity, made an inquiry as to the author; this meeting the eye of Mr. Hancock, he wrote the following

“REPLY.

The Eagle editor desires to know,
If poet farmers in Columbia *grow* :
What are his motives, I can not espy,
Perhaps 'tis vain his wish to gratify ;
And, should I trace my lineage or descent,
With brief relations I shall be content,
At the same time, I wish it understood,
I'm not of mean, nor yet of noble blood.
My father died without estate, or farm,
No house to screen his orphans from the storm,
Yet, through the adverse scenes of war and strife,
God has preserved my almost useless life ;
Through changing scenes, I scarce have power to scan,
Has led me on from childhood up to man.
He has been pleased, by his o'erruling hand,
To make me tenant on a piece of land,
And here by toil, and pain, and sweat I'm led,
To seek, from God, my own and children's bread.
A little cottage, formed of homely boards,
For us a shelter from the storm affords ;

My furniture is common, useful, plain,
Such as rich men in general would disdain,
No Turkey carpets on my floors are laid,
But such as were by ancient matrons made.
No costly side-boards, or decanters fill'd
With brandy, wine, or any thing distill'd ;
The library, which stands upon my shelf,
I have selected, chiefly for myself.
No deist authors, taught in Voltaire's school,
Whose reason is sarcastic ridicule ;
No romance, novel, fictitious, idle tale,
Such as in common are exposed for sale ;
No tragic author, no low comedy,
But select authors on Theology ;
Bibles in quarto, and octavo too,
Where God reveals what sinful man should do ;
With comments, labored as are in the land,
To help plain men the truth to understand.
History, and travels, chiefly to explore
The sacred Nile, and the Pacific shore,
The lives of warriors, and Geography,
With volumes written on divinity.
My sons, though not the first of human kind,
Are such as suit a Jersey farmer's mind,
A common share of mother wit, at most,
With common learning, is their highest boast.
Strangers to ball-rooms, parties, dancing-schools,
To billiards, cards, or manners taught by rules ;
Brought up to work, as heaven designed they should,
By toil, and sweat, they gain their livelihood.
My garners do afford a moderate store,
And oft a surplus for the hungry poor,

My choicest friends, who oft surround my board,
Are such as love, and fear, and serve the Lord.
No modern party, or gay circles, where
Some vain amusements banish social prayer ;
My tables are not spread with pampered food,
Which brings diseases, and inflames the blood.
There's no man's house, or goods, or gold, or throne,
I covet, or would wish to call my own,
Free from ambition to be rich or great,
I ask no office in the Church or State ;
But, heaven still smiling, may I not forget,
To use this world, as not abusing it.
And should my Maker lengthen out my days,
I hope to spend them to my Saviour's praise ;
Then, when I've served my God, though poor at best,
I'll leave the world in hope of endless rest."

John Hancock, and David Young the astronomer, lived near neighbors for many years, and were on terms of intimacy. The latter died in February, 1852. Father Hancock, then in his seventy-sixth year, wrote, and delivered at his funeral, the following lines. They show not only the vigor of his mind, but his great love for writing, even in advanced age:—

"Eternal God, we own thy Sovereign sway,
'Tis thine to govern, ours to obey ;
We would adore the wisdom of that God,
Who made all worlds, and governs with a nod.

Giver of life, Ruler of earth and heaven,
Thou hast a right to take what thou hast given,
We would adore the *grace* by which we're led,
Thy *justice, too*, when comforts all are fled.
O, we would view in death a hand divine,
And, though we mourn, we dare not now repine ;
To-day we're called to weep with those who weep,
O'er one who resteth, by thy will, in sleep.
He lived, like Newton, midst yon stars of light,
And dying, sees, with unobstructed sight,
The works of God, in nature and in grace,
And views in heaven his Saviour face to face.
There, worlds on worlds, unseen, unknown to man,
Which human skill can ne'er correctly scan,
With mind expanded, he can *now* explore,
And God, their glorious architect, adore ;
But his *grand* theme, a sinner saved will be,
Worthy the Lamb, who bled and died for me."

Father Hancock had a tender regard for his grandchildren. When they were small, he was accustomed to carry them with him to the field, and, placing them in some pleasant position, would converse with them in an artless manner of the things of God: one, little Fletcher, died when about a year old; the grandfather took his seat beside the cradle where the little sufferer lay, and watched with painful solicitude the progress of the disease. The struggle of death commenced.

The aged man could contain himself no longer. With a swelling heart, he exclaimed and wrote, while the child was dying:—

“Precious babe, to Jesus go,
Free from sin, and pain, and wo;
Jesus bought thee with his blood,
Jesus calls thee home to God.

No fond mother there to meet thee,
No kind father there to greet thee;
But Jesus loves thee, and is kind,
More than all thou leav'st behind.

Angels round thy cradle stand,
Waiting, at their Lord's command,
To escort thy soul away,
To the realms of endless day;

There to join the hosts above,
There to praise redeeming love,
There to shout the Saviour's name,
Once for fallen sinners slain.”

He was often requested to write epitaphs for tombstones. The following, it will be acknowledged, contains no flattery. To how many thousands, dying every year, will it apply? Some may, perhaps, object that it is too severe; but is it any more so than the Bible?

“THE DRUNKARD'S EPITAPH.

Here lies old * * * * *, whose face died shine,
 By drinking cider, brandy, gin, or wine,
 A son of Bacchus, though of modern birth,
 He was a tyrant while upon the earth ;
 He lived in sin, through all the days of youth,
 Then, in his age, he hated God and truth ;
 He lived a madman, and the devil's tool,
 He lived a drunkard, and he died a fool.
 The bell proclaimed his death with solemn toll,
 And then, no doubt, the devil took his soul.
 Now he is dead, his wealth can never buy
 A flask of rum his thirst to gratify.”

Where the characters were different, he could write more cheerfully. Witness the following:—

“CHRISTIAN'S EPITAPH.

Faith cheers the Christian through the tomb,
 While entering his eternal home,
 Removes the gloom, dispels his fear,
 And he, triumphant, enters there.”

“ON A PIOUS FEMALE.

Here lies interred, beyond this sea of strife,
 The fondest mother, and the loving wife ;
 Lovely while living, lovely when she fled,
 From scenes of wo, to mansions of the dead.”

When a poor, afflicted, but pious young man,

in the Morris County poor-house, died, he wrote his epitaph as follows:—

“ Although he died unknown, in solitude,
Though not a star of the first magnitude,
He will, no doubt, in heaven forever shine,
Bright as the Sun, in brilliancy divine.”

In the year 1839, anxious to provide a place of interment for himself and family, he set apart a small plot of ground, on the main road, a few rods from his house, for this sacred purpose. His first intention was, to make it strictly a family burial ground. Finding, however, that others wished to bury there, he changed its original design, enlarged the ground, had it permanently enclosed, and left in his will, that it should be a free public burial place forever.

Near the entrance to this ground, posts, some twelve feet high, are standing, nailed to which is a long black board, having painted on it, in yellow letters, sufficiently large to be distinctly read, the following lines, written by himself:—

“Ye travelers through this vale of strife,
To endless death, or endless life,

Here you may learn, midst joys or tears,
The end of worldly hopes or fears.
The rich, the wise, the mighty must
Commingle with their native dust.
Distinctions here, no more are known,
Between the vassal and the throne,
Princes, and courtiers, in the grave,
Are on a level with the slave ;
But ah ! beyond the bounds of space,
Where shall I find my destined place ?
Will righteous heaven propitious be,
To such a guilty wretch as me ?
O, save a sinner, mighty God,
By grace, through faith in Jesus' blood."

CHAPTER VIII.

INFLUENCE—USEFULNESS.

“Lives of *good* men all remind us,
We may make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us,
Foot-prints on the sands of time.”

LONGFELLOW.

“See that *ye* walk circumspectly.”—EPIH. 5 : 15.

ALL men make their mark. *All* leave their foot-prints on the sands of time.

For many years John Hancock led a pilgrim life. In the foregoing pages we have followed him up his laborious way, we have seen his toils and sorrows, have heard the very breathings of his heart, and been convinced that *Heaven* was the *home* he sought and for which he suffered.

The influence of such a life cannot be lost. The foot-prints of his pilgrimage are left, not only upon the “*sands of time*,” but impressed with rock-like fastness upon many immortal souls.

The full amount of good which he accomplished, through his long life of nearly fourscore years,

cannot be ascertained. It was the just remark of one, who knew him well, that wherever he went, the impression was left that he was a *good man*. From the beginning of his religious life he was a *preacher*, not only in the pulpit and on public occasions, but always and everywhere. In his private conversations, in the conscientious discharge of religious duties in his family, in his deportment before the world, as well as his zeal in the pulpit, it was evident that "the word of Christ dwelt in him richly in all wisdom." And this indwelling Christ gave him power among men for good.

We will here give some details from those who were benefited by his faithful labors. They show with great clearness the excellency of that scripture, "A word spoken in due season, how good it is."

In the year 1852 he received a letter from an old gentleman, then living at Honesdale, Pa. A part of this letter is here subjoined.

"DEAR FATHER (for so I should call you):—

It is now almost a year since I promised to

write you, but having so many cares to attend to in this busy world, I have been obliged to put it off till now. I am stronger than when I was at your house, but I see daily the frailty of poor feeble flesh, and know that, without the aid of Almighty God, we should soon droop and die. But we have a High Priest that is touched with the feelings of our infirmities, and though in the declining years of life, I never found grace more favorable and full than now. Looking at my weakness, I feel that I am liable to fall at any moment, but I remember the precious promise, "I will not leave thee, nor forsake thee;" then I say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him;" and in this way, Father Hancock, I have been traveling on till I have passed my three score years, and yet, with all my infirmities, I feel such a strong cord, binding my heart to the blessed Saviour, that it can not easily be broken. I often think of the time, (about fifty-one years ago,) when you were digging your cellar. I came up one evening, just as you were quitting work. You commenced talking with me about Religion,

exhorting me to be good, and to seek the Lord by prayer. You asked me if I ever prayed. I told you I did when I went to bed, such as, 'Now I lay me down to sleep,' for I knew no other then; but from that time I began to learn to pray, and afterwards sought and found the pearl of great price, (I was then about nine years old). I neglected my duty, however, and went back again to folly; but I shall never forget the impression your talk had upon my mind, and had I obeyed, and served God as I should, might have done some little good in the world."

Equally interesting is another from Terre Haute. As all these letters contain references to domestic matters, only those parts are given which show the influence of Mr. Hancock upon the minds of those who wrote.

"DEAR BRO. AND SIST. HANCOCK:—

"In my retired moments, and particularly while in affliction's furnace, I have looked back, with pleasing delight, to the time when a little errand led me, on a cold winter's evening, to

your house. Your kind solicitations prevailed upon me to stop for a little while. Till then, I had been a stranger to heart-felt Religion; and I well remember the trembling emotions of my mind, as you talked to me of redeeming grace, and dying love: my heart was full, but when sister H. touched that tender cord—a parent's love, a *mother's prayers*—the great deep was broken up, then and *there* a wound was made which the Balm of Gilead alone could cure. * * *

* * * Well, I am, by the tender mercy of God, still on the road to eternal bliss. We are living by faith, prayer, and watchfulness—our trust and confidence in the Lord unshaken. Family prayer is strictly attended to every morning and evening; it never has been neglected, and, by the grace of God, it never shall be. We try to live for Eternity. Please write to me soon, and do not cease to pray for me. I hope to see you again in this life, as we contemplate a visit to the East next summer, if we prosper till then. But I leave all in the hands of Him, who has kept me thus far, knowing that He will do all

things well; and if we meet no more on earth, I trust our spirits will mingle in praise around the blissful throne in Heaven. Such is the sincere prayer of your unworthy, but affectionate son in the Gospel."

That it was the uniform habit of Mr. Hancock to speak with all persons with whom he came in contact, upon the subject of Religion, may be gathered from the following incident, of an opposite character.

On one occasion, a pedlar, who had heard of this habit, called at his house, and asked him to purchase some of his articles; but from some cause he gave him a trifling reply. The man, who was better prepared to receive an exhortation than such an answer, was surprised, and with a serious look and tone, inquired, "Is not this Mr. Hancock?" It was enough. It crushed and almost broke his heart, and through all his life that serious and solemn inquiry, "IS NOT THIS MR. HANCOCK?" rang in his ears like a funeral knell. Often and bitterly did he weep over his folly,

and, on his dying bed, spoke of it as *one of the great errors* of his life. But, while he wept over this omission of duty, his widow declares that she believes it was the only instance of a person ever going from his door without some serious word in reference to his soul.

How constant, then, was his habit of religious conversation, and what an untold amount of good is reserved for future and eternal development accomplished in this simple and unostentatious way. How strictly he ever after complied with the Apostolic injunction, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ."

A number of years ago, during some of his travels, he found a family, recently from England, in very needy circumstances. In this family was a little girl, four or five years old. With the parents' consent, he took the little one with him to his own home, and kept her for a length of time. In the year 1850, a letter, written in a very neat and lady-like hand, was received at the humble cottage in East Madison. It was from her who, years before, had been sheltered, through the pelting

storms of winter, in the bosom of this Christian family. A part of the letter is here appended :—

“ Again I take up my pen to impart a few lines to my much esteemed and beloved friends, whose kindness to me, in younger days, will ever be remembered with fondest recollections.

How much I should love to see you all once more ; but, if we are not permitted to enjoy the privilege of meeting on this side of eternity, pray for me, dear friends, that we may meet on that bright shore where friends shall never part. I have sent you my likeness ; I beg you to accept it as a token of friendship.

Dear grandfather, and uncle M., if I may yet call you so, I have read the letter which I received from you, over and over again, and it gives me a great deal of pleasure, as it calls to mind the many happy days that I have spent in your house. I must now close, but not without sending my kindest love to you all ; and, in your prayers, do not forget one who is in great need of them. I am very solicitous to hear from you, and a few

lines would be cherished with the fondest care. Dear grandmother, I often think of you."

There is not a doubt but the religious influences exerted upon the mind of this fair correspondent, while in the family of Mr. Hancock, ripened ultimately into a permanent religious character, evidences of which are seen, even in the above brief extract.

Thousands of others were benefited by his influence and example, many of whom went before him to the spirit world, and with whom he had no written correspondence; consequently the earthly record of his usefulness is incomplete. But a surer record and more enduring testimony is on high, where the "wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

The superintendent of the Morris County Poor-house says:—"It is about forty years since my first interview with John Hancock. It was at a Sabbath-school, over which I had the supervision. He had made an appointment to preach there,

and, as he came in, a friend introduced him to me. I proposed to close the school, but he objected, saying he was never more delighted than when in the Sabbath-school, where the children were taught the Word of God.

After the lessons were through, he addressed a few words of encouragement to the children, and then proposed to spend the remainder of the time in prayer. It was a precious season. I went home with the conviction that he was a man who lived near to God, and the more I became acquainted with him, the more that belief was strengthened. When I came to take charge of the Poor-house, my predecessor very kindly said, 'there is one thing you will be pleased with—the visits of Mr. Hancock.' So we ever found it, and we now feel to bless God for the privilege we enjoyed. He never missed an appointment, however unpleasant the weather might be. At one time he came, the day was very stormy; he was much fatigued, and seemed very unwell. Before bed-time he grew so very ill, that I said to my family, it is more than likely Father Hancock

will be called away before morning. I offered to watch with him through the night; he objected, and said, 'I came to try to persuade sinners to repent; but, if the Lord sees fit to take me home, it will be far better.' I went to him in the night, found him easier, and the most happy person I ever saw. In the morning, he was much revived, and preached as interestingly as I ever heard him. His visits and preaching have been a great benefit to us, and his influence upon the pauper family most salutary, resulting in the salvation of several of their precious souls.

I never heard one of them speak lightly of him; and, indeed, it seems to me, that from the time of my first acquaintance with him, till he was taken to heaven, God was in all his thoughts."

His labors were greatly blessed in Hackensack. One man, when dying, said to his wife, "I have received more light, upon the plan of salvation, from the sermons of Mr. Hancock, than in all the preaching I ever heard." He was looked upon by those who knew him there, as an humble and devout servant of Jesus Christ. All venerated

and loved him. His usual advice, on leaving the village, was, "Well, friends, treasure up the truth in good and honest hearts." To a brother in the place, he often said, familiarly, "Well, Brother Stephen, fight on; it is hard work to get a Dutchman converted, but, when converted, he is immovable." It is believed many were saved through his labors there.

The following communication, from the Baptist Church in Northfield, Essex Co., N. J., may also serve to illustrate the estimation in which his services were held:—

"REV. MR. HANCOCK.—*Respected Sir*:—We, the undersigned, beg leave to inform you that we have had the honor of being appointed a committee, by the inhabitants of Northfield parish, at their Society meeting, March 30th, 1843, for the purpose of waiting upon you in order to return the grateful acknowledgments of the people composing said congregation. We, therefore, in their name, return you sincere and heart-felt thanks for the following favors.

For your kindness in supplying their pulpit occasionally, when they were otherwise destitute. For the interest you have taken in the general welfare of the Society, temporally and spiritually. For the actual assistance you have rendered them, personally and financially, in repairing their meeting-house, and putting up the fence around the meeting-house yard. As we wish always to retain a grateful sense of the obligations we are under, for favors received, either from God or man, we hope you will be kind enough to accept of this our humble tribute of respect and gratitude, as it is all the return which, at this time, we have it in our power to make.

Be assured, at the same time, that you will always, when it shall suit your convenience, be a welcome visitor among us; you have our prayers, also, for the blessing of God to rest upon you and yours, and that you may be rewarded a hundred-fold for your timely aid to us.

By order, and in behalf of the Parish.

SIGNED BY THE COMMITTEE."

To a man laboring as he did, without pecuniary support or aid, such little expressions of appreciation and gratitude must have been exceedingly gratifying; and, as the Church above referred to had nothing to give but their thanks, it argues much thought on their part, to return those thanks, officially and in writing. The above communication from a Church, but a few miles from his own cottage, where he had then lived between forty and fifty years, will show further the truthfulness of a remark once made to him, in a somewhat complaining mood. A minister, not altogether pleased with his manner of preaching, said, "Brother Hancock, I think you do best where you are best known." This remark, though not intended as a compliment, was, indeed, the highest encomium that could have been paid to his moral worth. Those who knew him *best* loved him *most*; hence the esteem of the Church at Northfield, and the exclamation of all his friends and neighbors—" *He was a good man.*"

The whole life of John Hancock made the im-

pression that he was good. But in this life, there were particulars which served to strengthen the impression, and as circumstances occurred to develop these particulars, the conviction of his thorough goodness was irresistible.

Many of these have been brought out in the course of these pages; let one or two more suffice. He was strictly conscientious, and labored to do right, observing, as far as possible, the golden rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." This gave him power.

He tried to impress the same views on the minds of his children. One of these, at a certain time, having picked up a pin at the door of a neighbor, he desired her to carry it back, and restore it to its owner; on another occasion, the same child had gathered up a few scraps of morocco from the floor of a shoemaker's shop, which coming to the knowledge of the father, he took the child by the hand, led her back to the shop, requested her to restore them, and ask forgiveness of the owner. These were small matters in themselves, but now, at the expiration of

fifty years, their influence upon that mind is mighty.

At home he ruled in love. Never commanding, a simple request secured obedience.

When leaving his family for a few days, to preach the Gospel, he usually uttered some scriptural precept to be observed during his absence, generally the following:—"Fear God, and keep his commandments. Farewell."

CHAPTER IX.

CLOSING SCENES.

“ A holy quiet reigns around,
A calm which life nor death destroys,
And naught disturbs that peace profound,
Which his unfettered soul enjoys.

Farewell, conflicting hopes and fears,
Where lights and shades alternate dwell;
How bright the unchanging morn appears,
Farewell, inconstant world, farewell!

Life's labor done, as sinks the clay,
Light from its load the spirit flies,
While heaven and earth combine to say,
How blest the righteous when he dies.”

BARBAULD.

HOME! home! how sweet the exclamation.
Earth hath few brighter or better words than
home! Man, no higher earthly enjoyments than
those realized on reaching, after a weary and painful
exile, his loved and cherished *home*. Heaven is
the Christian's home. The aged Hancock nears
it. Henceforth his footsteps are few and feeble.
Life's work is closing. Rest is in view. For

many years he has regarded earth as a vineyard, and human life a brief day in which man should labor. And, truly, few have toiled more industriously, even to the twilight of old age and infirmity, than he.

Now, as the bright stars of hope and promise shine out in the firmament of God, his weary, tottering steps turn gladly to his eternal rest; his pilgrim-staff—the BIBLE. Love animates his heart; hope brightens his eye; and his lips exclaim, "Heaven! It is not that Paul is there, or that John is there, that Abraham or the Prophets are there, or that our own dear friends are there, but it is that God is there, filling all, and in all."

Could the prospect of such a heaven, after so many years of labor, be otherwise than sweet?

His last illness commenced in the early part of June, 1854. On the ninth day of that month, he walked out to breathe the pure air of early Summer; it was the last time those pilgrim feet ever pressed the earth; his last weary mile was traveled, and he entered again his own cottage door to die. On the same day, after a little rest, un-

willing to be idle, he took his pen to complete an acrostic which he had commenced a few days before, at the request of a young lady, whose father had often preached beneath his roof.

This acrostic, the promptings of friendship, and the last effort of his pen, written in great feebleness of body, at the advanced age of nearly seventy-eight years, has a peculiar interest and sacredness about it, which, notwithstanding its private character, makes its insertion here appropriate.

“ACROSTIC.

Mary first chose the better part,
And loved the Lord with all her heart;
Renounced the world, its pomp and show,
Youth's vain delights, and pleasures, too.

Love drew her heart, grace fixed her love
On everlasting things above;
Upwards she pressed, heaven's bliss to find—
Is this your aim, is this your mind?
Seek for that bliss, whate'er betide,
All, all is vanity beside.

Pursue your course without disguise,
Onward, and upward to the skies;
Trusting in God for needful good,
Trusting for grace in Jesus' blood,
Safely to bring you home to God.”

The day following, he was confined to his bed. The next was the Sabbath; then he said to his daughter, "Let me know when you are ready for breakfast." At the proper time, she asked:—"Father, do you feel able to rise?" He answered, "Yes," and did; and taking the old family Bible, which he had used so many thousand times, opened it at Christ's sermon on the mount, and read once more, with a faint and trembling voice, that inimitable prayer, "Our Father which art in heaven;" then, kneeling down with the family, repeated it in tones that moved every heart; but as he came to the closing sentence, his strength gave way, and, unable to say more, was assisted to his bed; and that morning, the family altar, which had stood for more than fifty years, witnessed his devotions for the last time.

In a few days the fever yielded to medical treatment, his cough and pain were easier, and there seemed to be nothing in the way of his recovery, but age and extreme debility. In this state he remained for several weeks, his peace flowing like a river. During his illness, the house was throng-

ed with visitors. Old and young, Christians and those who made no profession, all were anxious to see his face once more, and hear the dying testimony of one who had so long recommended Religion to others. The dying saint had a message for all. In his sickness he frequently asked persons to sing, "There is a fountain filled with blood;" "Jesus, lover of my soul;" "Rock of ages, cleft for me;" and, at two different periods, he arose in bed and read for himself the latter hymn.

He often exclaimed:—"Great peace have they which love thy law;" then placing his hand upon his breast, would say, "this peace I have in my heart, in such a degree as I never expected to enjoy on earth." In prospect of heaven, he exultingly exclaimed:—

"All o'er those wide extended plains,
Shines one eternal day.

And the best of all is,

There God, the Son, forever reigns,
And scatters night away.

All the promises in the Bible are for me."

One night, thinking that he was dying, he

called his son, and gave him some directions about pecuniary matters; then turning to his daughter, said:—"Don't be surprised if you find the spirit has departed, I am not afraid: .

'Fearless I'd launch away.' "

On Sabbath, the 23d of July, it was thought the time of his departure had arrived; his children and grandchildren were called to take their leave of him, when each, according to their age and condition, received his farewell advice and charge. To the pastor, who called that day, he said:—"Bro. Gaskill, I am struggling between life and death, but from the beginning of my sickness God has filled me with unusual love and peace." In a few days he revived a little. He was grateful for all blessings, and often contrasted his condition with that of the poor and destitute. At the remembrance of these things, tears flowed profusely down his furrowed cheeks. A relative, about going to the city, asked what she should procure for him in New York. He answered:—"My wants are all supplied." Still she insisted that he should think of something that could not be

obtained at home; he then said:—“*I want nothing so much as more of the love of God.*”

Bolstered in a rocking-chair, one day, his daughter opened the front door, and asked if he would not like to look out and see how beautiful the earth appeared at such a pleasant season; he turned his head and gazed a moment, then closing his eyes, from the fullness of his heart, exclaimed:

‘O when shall I see Jesus,
And reign with him above!’

This earth has lost all its charms for me.”

His strength gradually failing, he spoke with difficulty, and many an unconverted person received a faithful warning in a whisper. But his time was not yet. The kind attentions of deeply interested children and friends, under the blessing of God, measurably restored him; and after a few weeks, with help, he was able to walk into an adjoining room, and sit a few moments with the family. Hopes were entertained of his recovery. One of the many friends who called to see him, said:—

“Mr. Hancock, I am glad to see you better. I could not think that your work was all done.”

He replied:—“My recovery is doubtful, but I am in the hands of the Lord. If it should be his will, I should like to get well enough to preach from Acts 5 : 31. I have thought much upon that text lately.”

This was the only time he was heard to express a desire to get well. Soon, however, his cough and fever returned, and he experienced a severe pain in his right side; when he, smiling, said:—“It is the Lord, let Him do as seemeth Him good; it is all nothing to what my Saviour bore for me.”

Several times, through these sufferings, he remarked:—“As often as I have repeated the Lord's prayer, I could never so freely say, ‘Thy will be done,’ as now;” and referring to acts of injustice, to which he had submitted, said, “I as freely forgive as I wish to be forgiven.”

His memory failed on all subjects except the Scriptures, and the great scheme of human redemption; these he retained with all the vigor of youth.

About this time he gave directions concerning his funeral services, and never, until now, would consent that a grave stone should be erected to his memory. Indeed, in the very month that he was taken sick, he wrote out the following extract, the last he ever copied:—"When your eyes are closed in dreamless slumber, better rest in an unmarked grave, and leave a record of faithfulness written upon *hearts*, than lie beneath sculptured marble, with your virtues emblazoned thereon. Such a record will outlast earth's monuments, as long as mind shall triumph over matter, and eternity over time."

This paragraph embodied his views upon the subject, and now that he consents to any kind of a mark being placed at his grave, its cost must not exceed a certain sum, for he believed that expensive ones were useless, and the money could be applied to better purposes.

His memory failing so that he could not keep an account of time or dates, he placed, as early as August, a sum of money in the hands of his son, to be given to certain poor families on Christmas

day. A few cool days coming on in the early part of September, he spoke several times of these families, and feared they might be suffering for want of fuel. For years he had helped them, and now, though dying, his sympathies are with them still. He could not forget that, when a little child, his own mother was left a widow, and how a small act of kindness, rendered by Deacon S., of M., placed him in a comfortable position.

He continued to sink; yet gave directions that all who called might be admitted to his room, though often too weak to articulate, and only able to give a look of recognition. At times he would tremulously say, "I am on the very brink of Jordan; too weak to talk, I can only *believe* and *hope*."

Many precious utterances escaped his lips, giving abundant evidence of the state of his mind. In the midst of his greatest distress and weakness, he quoted Scripture, with readiness and accuracy. Indeed, the Divine Word was the only staff upon which he leaned, while passing through the valley and shadow of death, and that gave him comfort.

His cough increasing, they gave him an opiate; this caused his mind to wander, and, being conscious of it, he exclaimed:—“*A wreck of a man.*”

Two days before his death, he sat up in his bed, observing the movements of the family; his daughter, approaching him, asked, “Father, would you like to get well, and mingle again with us?” After a moment’s pause, he answered:—“*I would like more of the love of God.*” This he had found in a large degree, many years before; but, still conscious there was a higher attainment, and that death was no barrier to its possession, he longs, upon the very borders of the spirit world, “to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that he might be filled with all the fullness of God;” then break away into the eternal glory, and enjoy it forever.

The last day of his life came—it was a still September Sabbath—the most sacred of all the year; an appropriate season in which to close a long and laborious life. Night approached. To a

friend, who was watching with him, he *whispered*, "*Jesus died for sinners, and He died for me;*" pausing a little, he repeated, "*Jesus died for sinners, and He died for me;*" making still another effort, he uttered once more, "JESUS DIED FOR SINNERS, AND HE DIED FOR ME." Wishing to be raised up, and calling for his family, he said:—"I am going," and taking each of his children by the hand, gave them a farewell kiss. He then asked for his wife. She had been sick and absent from his room several days. Supported to his bedside, she bent in her age over the dying form of her venerable husband, while he, as the last act of his long and useful life, pressed his cold lips to her brow, and then, six times in succession, to the withered hand of his once fair young wife, whispering, with the last:—"That will do;" it was a kiss for each child, and immediately his head dropped, he gasped, and the union, which had existed so happily for more than *half a century*, was dissolved by death. Then all was silent, save the low sobs of that stricken family; as before them, in death, lay

the father, husband, and pilgrim of nearly four score years.

“Not in the fiery hurricane of strife,
Midst slaughtered legions, he resigned his life,
But peaceful as the twilight's parting ray,
His spirit vanished from its house of clay ;
And left on kindred souls such power imprest,
They seemed with him to enter into rest.”

His funeral was attended on the following Tuesday by a large concourse of people. His remains now rest in the ground devised by himself for a public burial place, near the dwelling which, for so many years, he occupied in life.

His grave is marked by a plain marble slab, with the following brief inscription :—

“JOHN HANCOCK,

FOR FIFTY YEARS A FAITHFUL MINISTER OF JESUS CHRIST.

Born Dec. 6, 1776, Died Sept. 17, 1854.

‘He, being dead, yet speaketh.’”

We have seen the leadings of God in the life of this devoted man; and now, at its close, let us

who remain, watch unto prayer; imitate his pious example; learn how much can be done for the glory of God in the humblest walks of life; that, when our earthly labors end, we, too, may find with him, in Heaven, a PILGRIM'S EVERLASTING REST.

THE END.

M.H. *

JAN 17 1940

